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Naturalizing the Neoliberal Subject, The Object: to Change the Soul

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Naturalizing the Neoliberal Subject

The Object: to Change the Soul

Hanneke van Deursen

Francisco Sanin, Yutaka Sho, Marcos Parga

Fall 2019

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Naturalizing the Neoliberal Subject

The Object: to Change the Soul

Neoliberalism exists in two forms: policy and ideology. On the policy side, a crusade of deregulation, privatization, and competition was ushered in by Neoliberal politicians like Margaret Thatcher and Ronald Reagan. On the ideology side, Neoliberalism constructs for us a series of truth games. It tells us: our society is too complex for us to understand, and therefore it can not be ordered by humans. In contrast, the market is itself a mechanism of spontaneous order, and therefore is better suited to calculate, process, and order our society. Subsequently, it is humans who must adapt to the needs of the market.

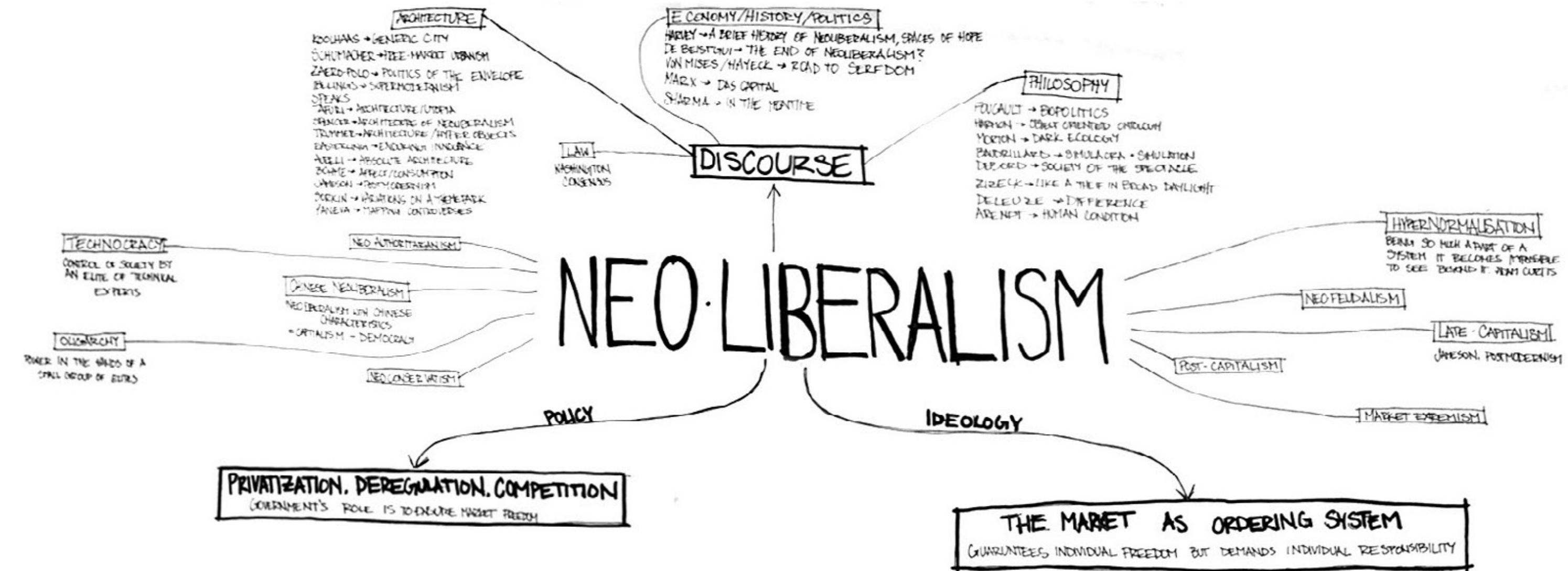
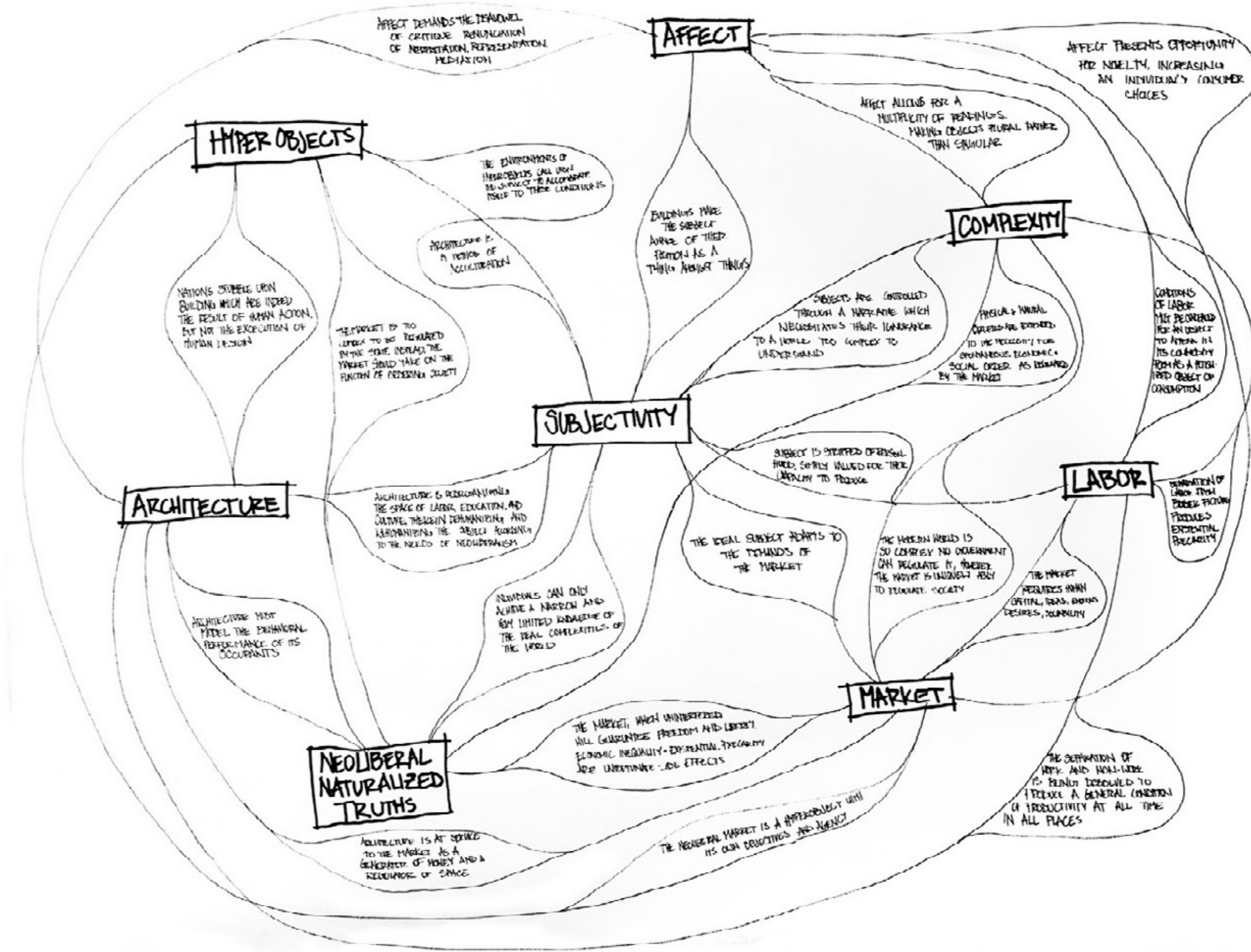
The result is the financialization of everything, and the production of a subject who is most compatible with the needs of the market. This subject is pacified, so as to numb criticality, and this subject's human capital is maximized, spending all time producing or consuming. The market operates as the head of design of our cities, and builds environments which perpetuate its ideal subject.

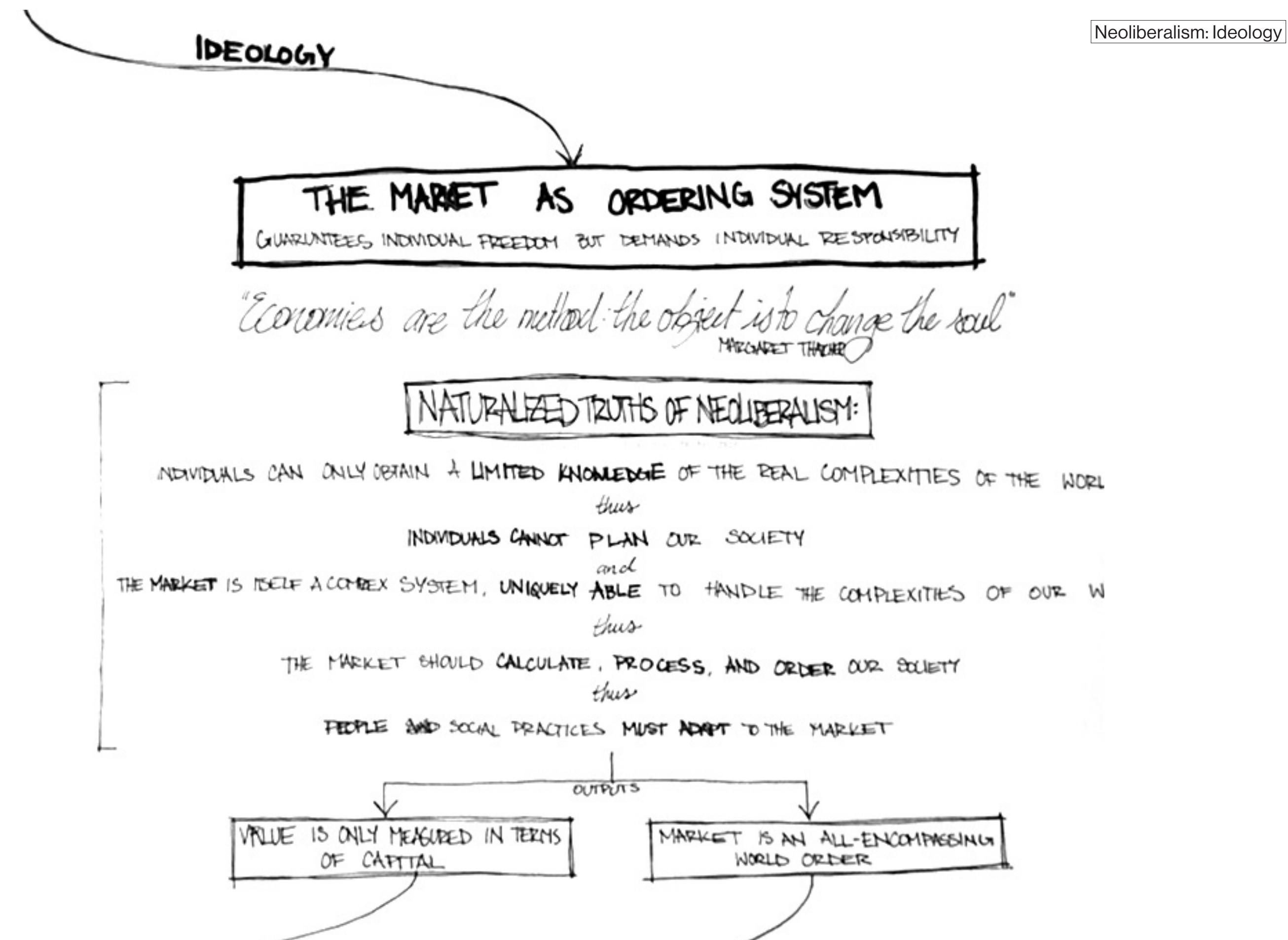
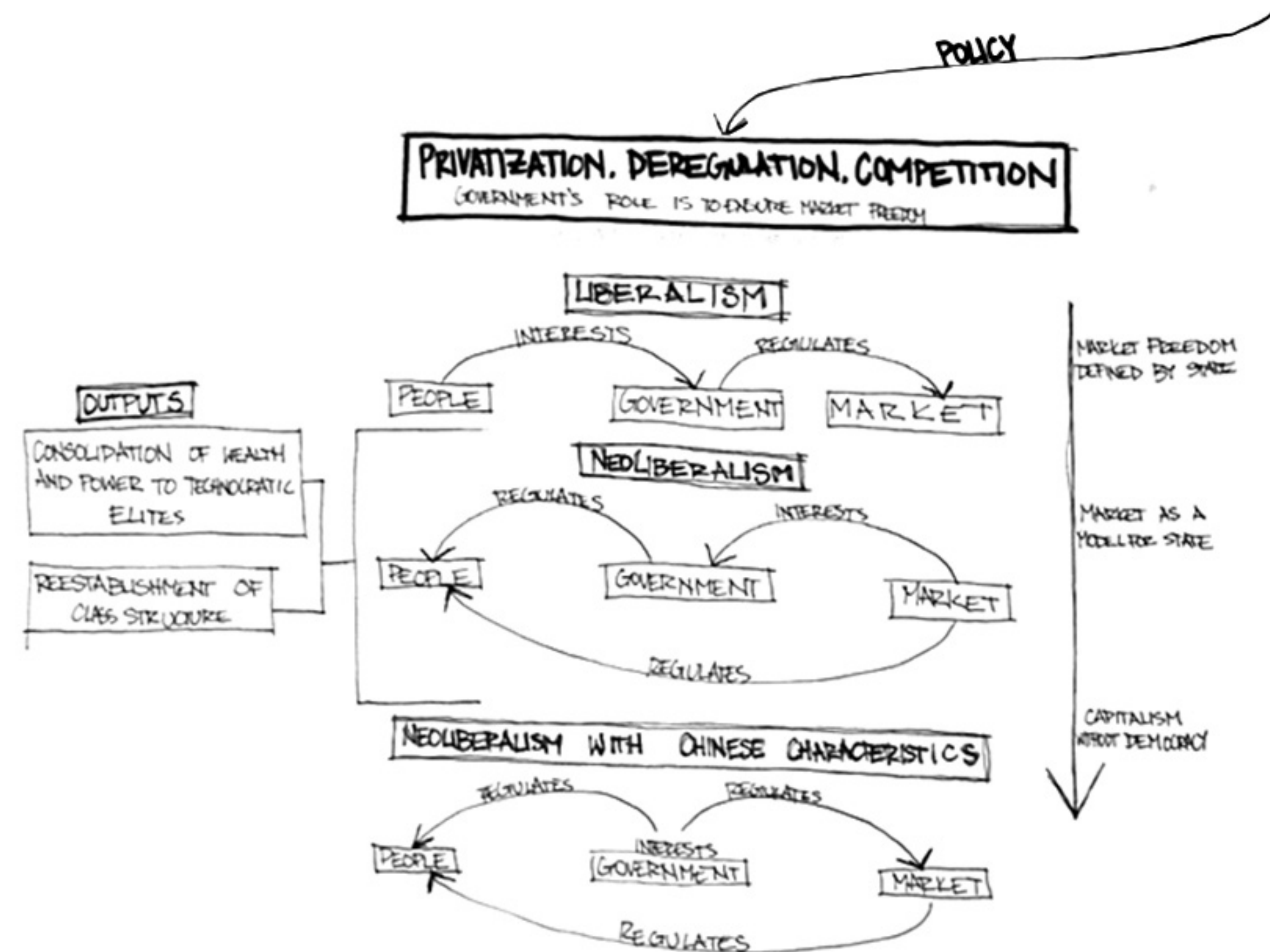
In the landscape of tax breaks, enterprise zones, and visa incentives, particular environments emerge which project the agenda of the market in its most raw state. These environments, capital imaginaries, are produced by Neoliberal policy and naturalize Neoliberal ideology. Inside, they reveal the production of the Neoliberal Subject which exists in all spaces.

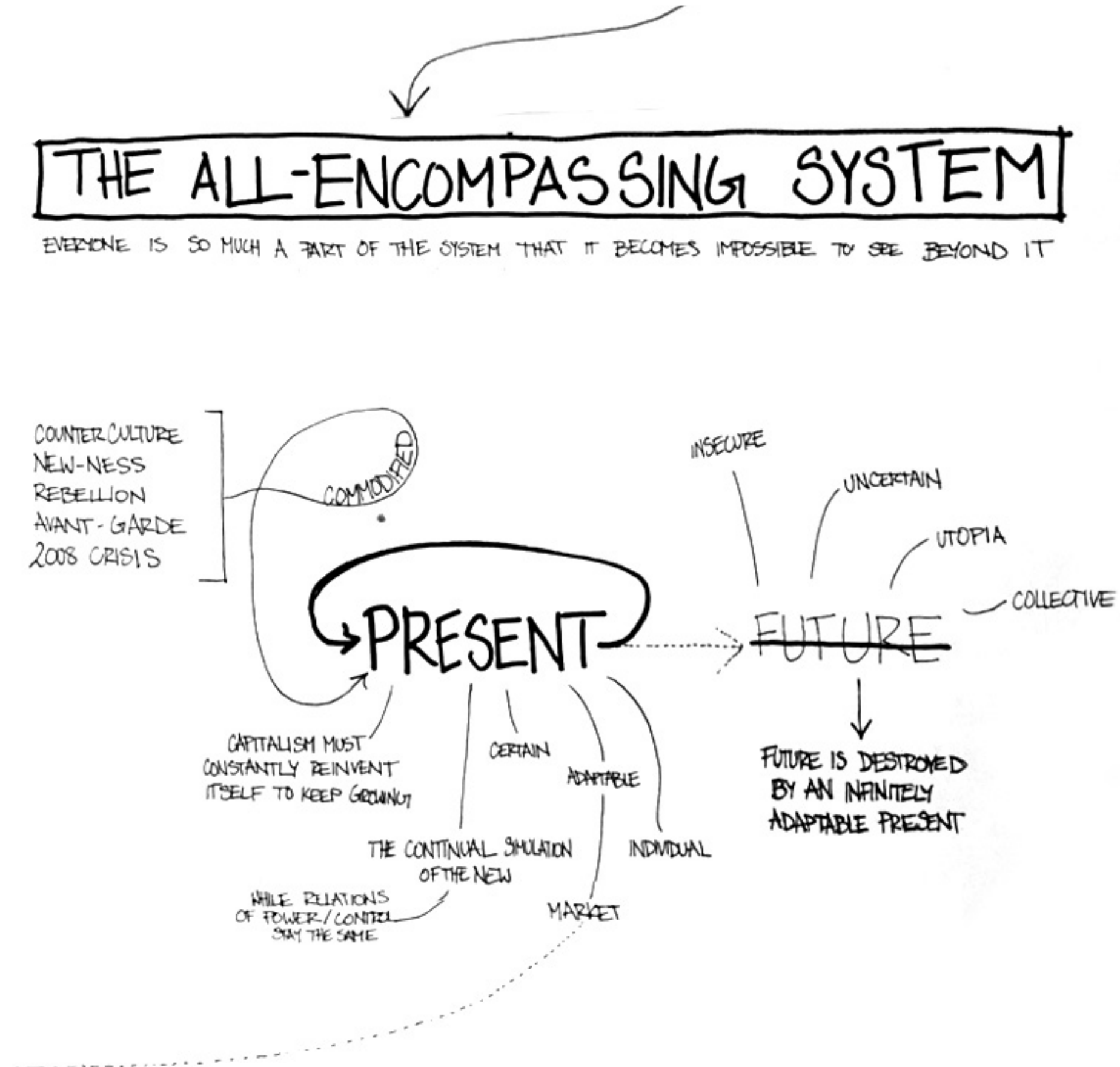
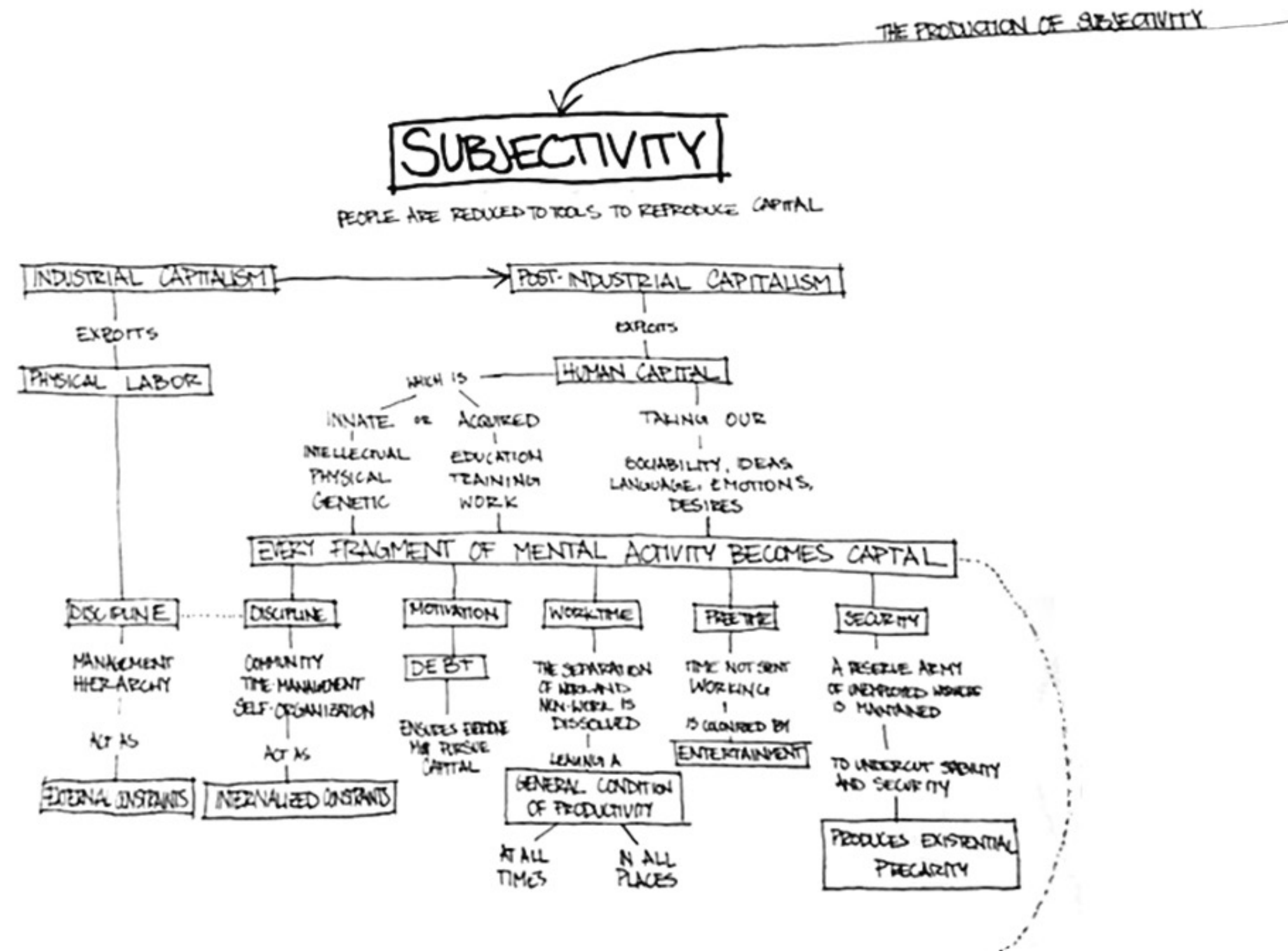
The Neoliberal Subject is comprised of three parts, and for each part I have developed a case study on a capital imaginary whose construction is directly in pursuit of its production. First, the Depoliticized Individual. In my own truth games, I assert that Kop van Zuid in Rotterdam is about the view. The view constructs the individual, and in such a way that they are depoliticized. Second, the Uncritical Laborer. In these truth games, I assert that Canary Wharf in London is a simulacrum. The simulacrum constructs the laborer, and in such a way that they are made uncritical. Third, the Entertained Consumer. In these truth games, I assert that Hudson Yards is about the experience. The experience constructs the consumer, and in such a way that they are constantly entertained.

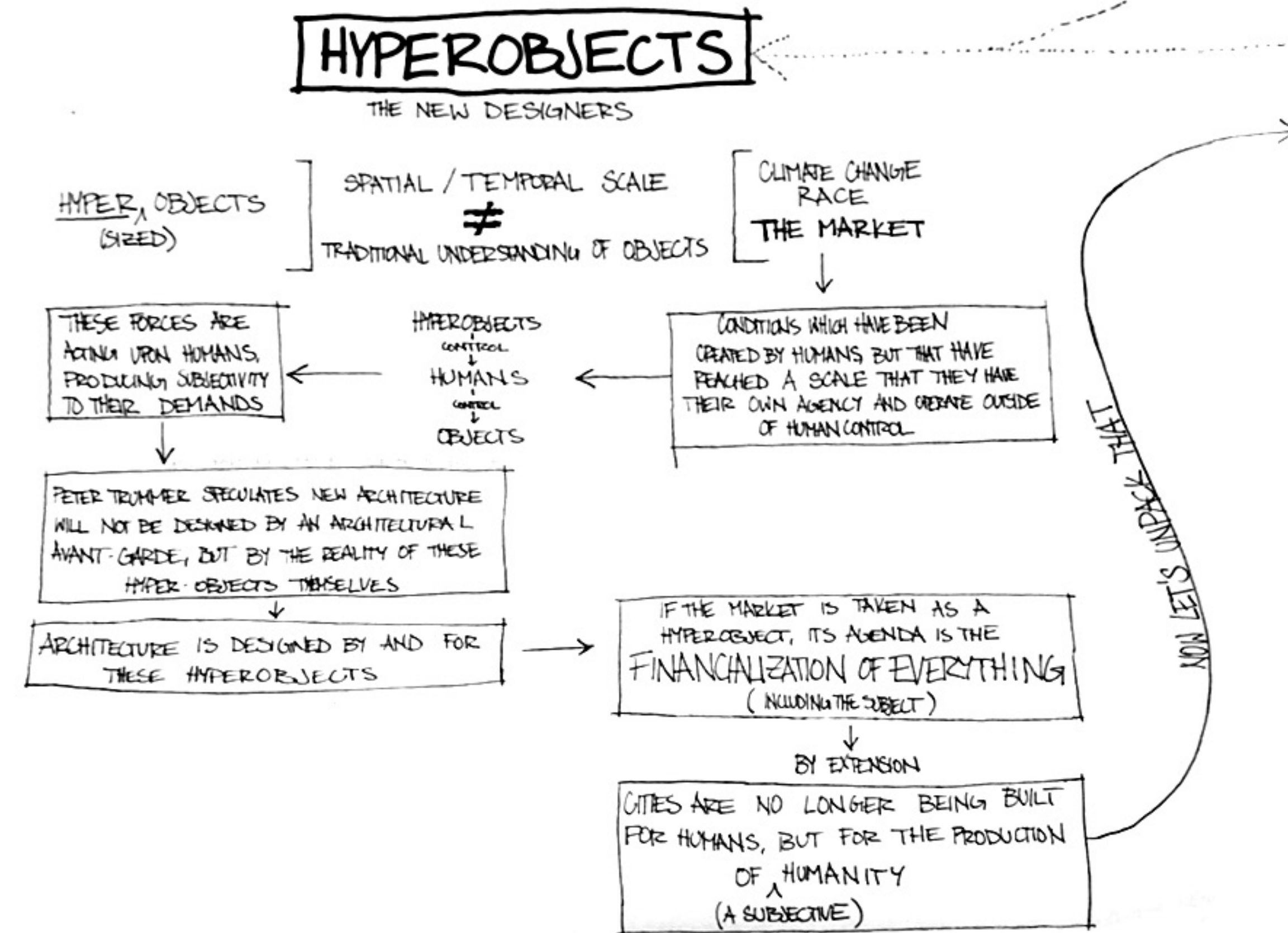
The Neoliberal Subject as naturalized by Capital Imaginaries is a terrifying figure. They have been pacified, castrated, and are constantly either producing or consuming. They are burnt out, stressed out, and are under the impression it is due to their own flaws. Far from honoring our 'Right to the City' the landscapes of capital we produce are naturalizing our own demise.











ARCHITECTURE

IF WE GRANT ~~ARCHITECTURE~~ THE MARKET THE RESPONSIBILITY OF ORDERING OUR SOCIETY

then
THE MARKET REQUIRES THE SUBJECT TO ACCOMMODATE THEMSELVES TO ITS CONDITIONS

which
NECESSITATES THE DEHUMANIZING AND DEHUMANIZING OF THE SUBJECT ACCORDING TO THE NEEDS OF THE MARKET

if
ARCHITECTURE DIRECTS THE BEHAVIOR OF ITS OCCUPANTS

then
ARCHITECTURE MUST REORGANIZE THE SPACES OF LABOR, EDUCATION, CULTURE

and so
ARCHITECTURE BECOMES A TOOL OF NEOLIBERAL ACCULTURATION

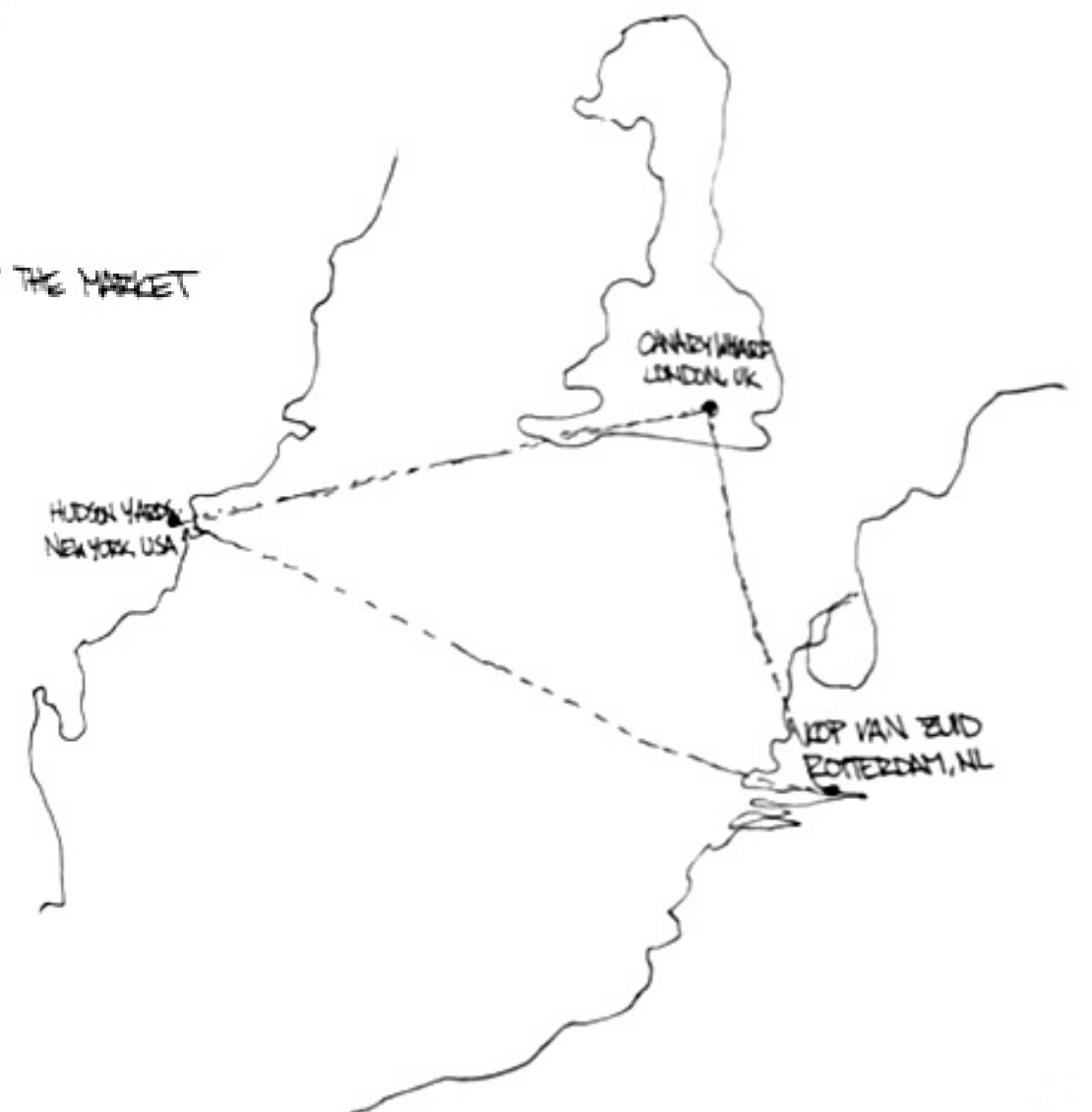
AND SO, I ASK...

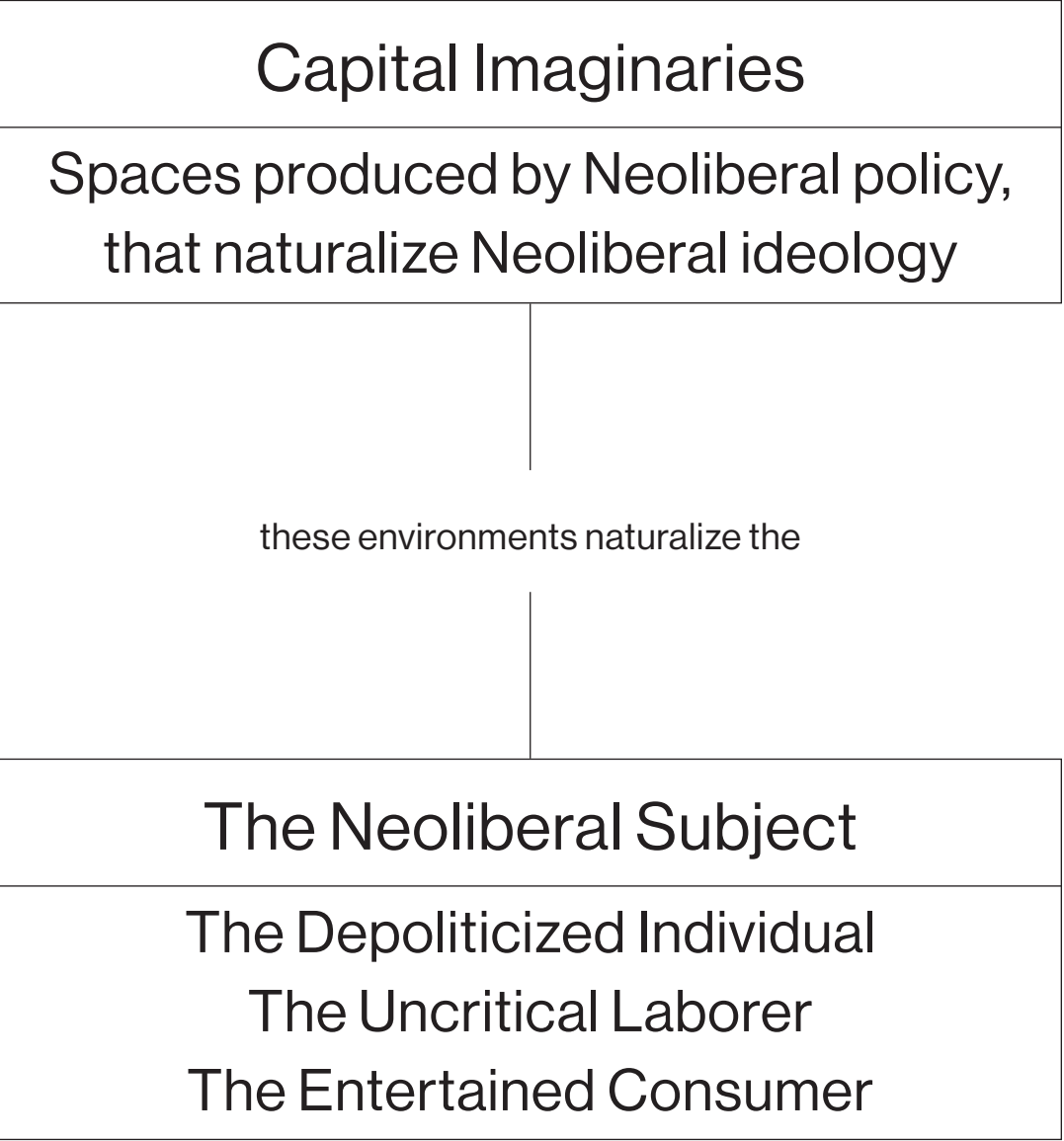
HOW CAN NEOLIBERALISM'S CONTRADICTIONS BE EXPLOITED?

WHERE ARE THE CRACKS?

WHAT MAKES HUDSON YARDS, CANARY WHARF, AND KOP VAN ZUID EERILY SURREAL?

WHAT ARE THESE ENVIRONMENTS NATURALIZING? WHAT ARE THEY TRAINING US TO BE?





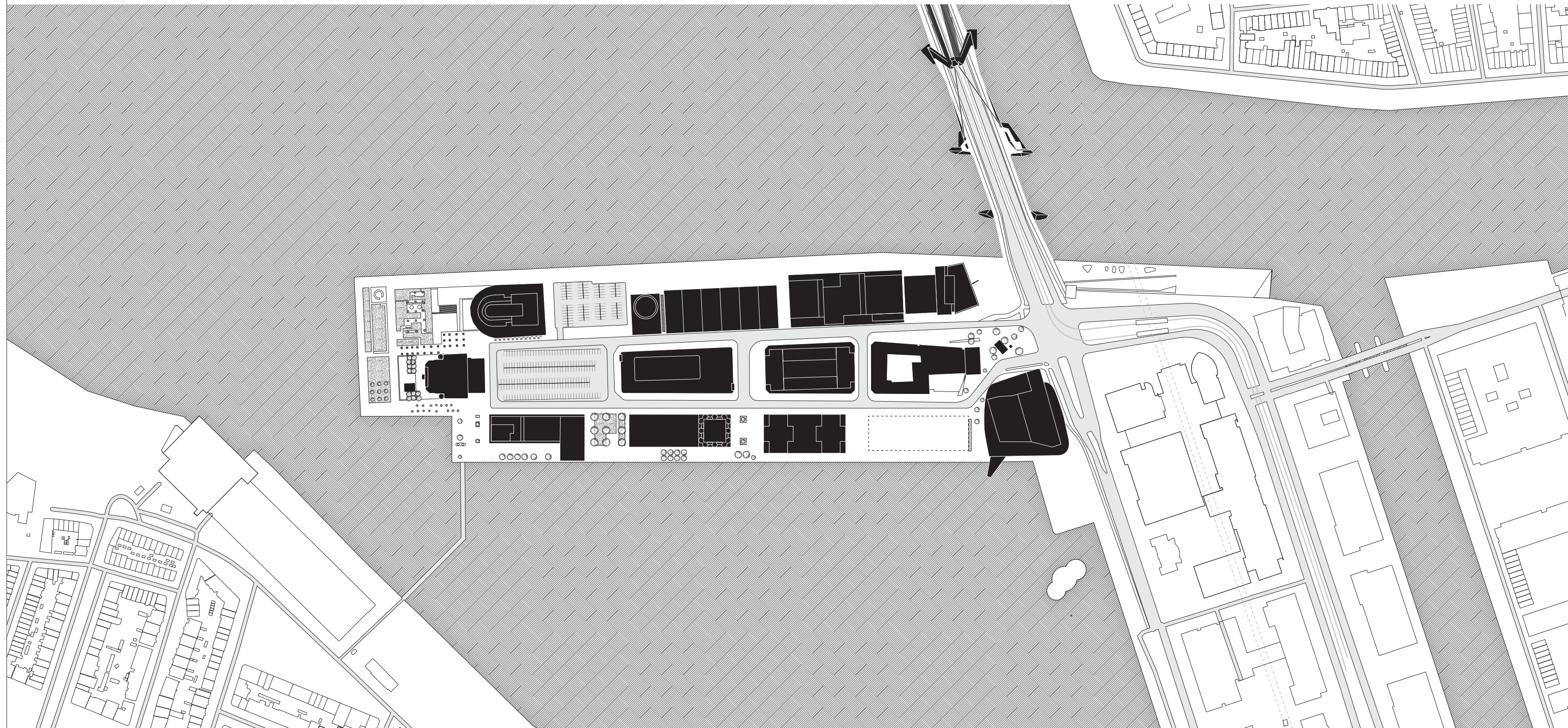
Kop van Zuid
The Depoliticized Individual



Rotterdam

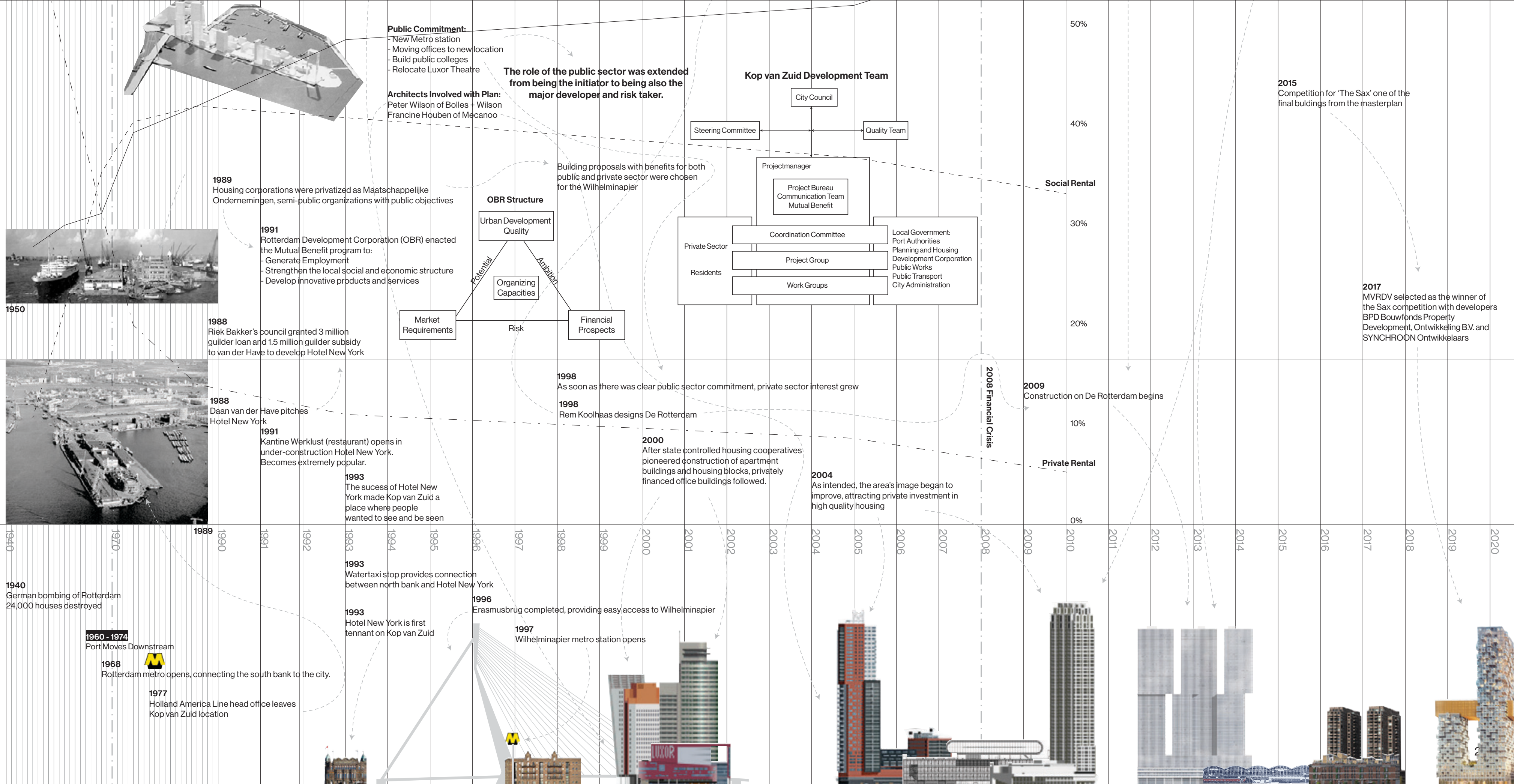
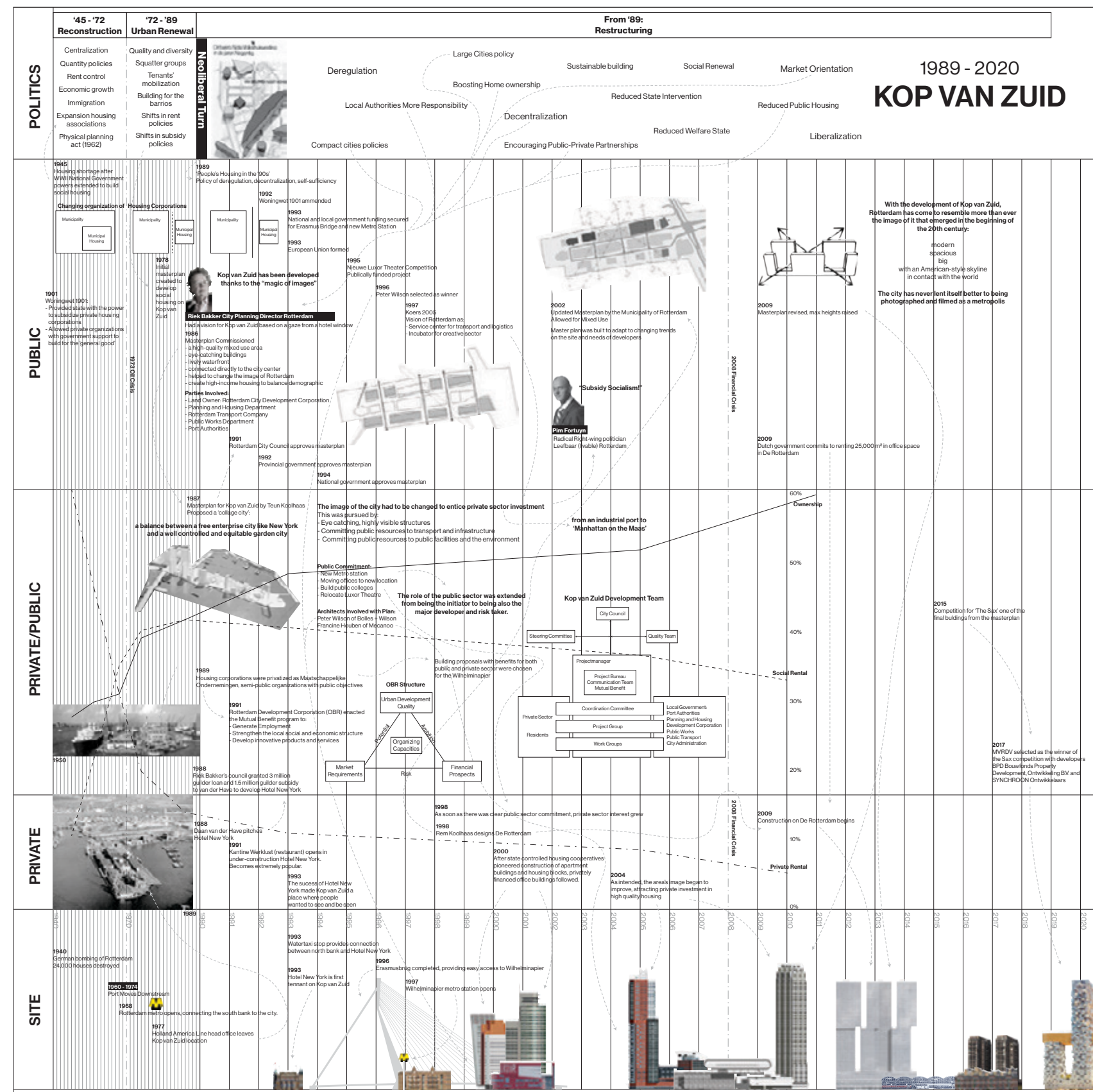


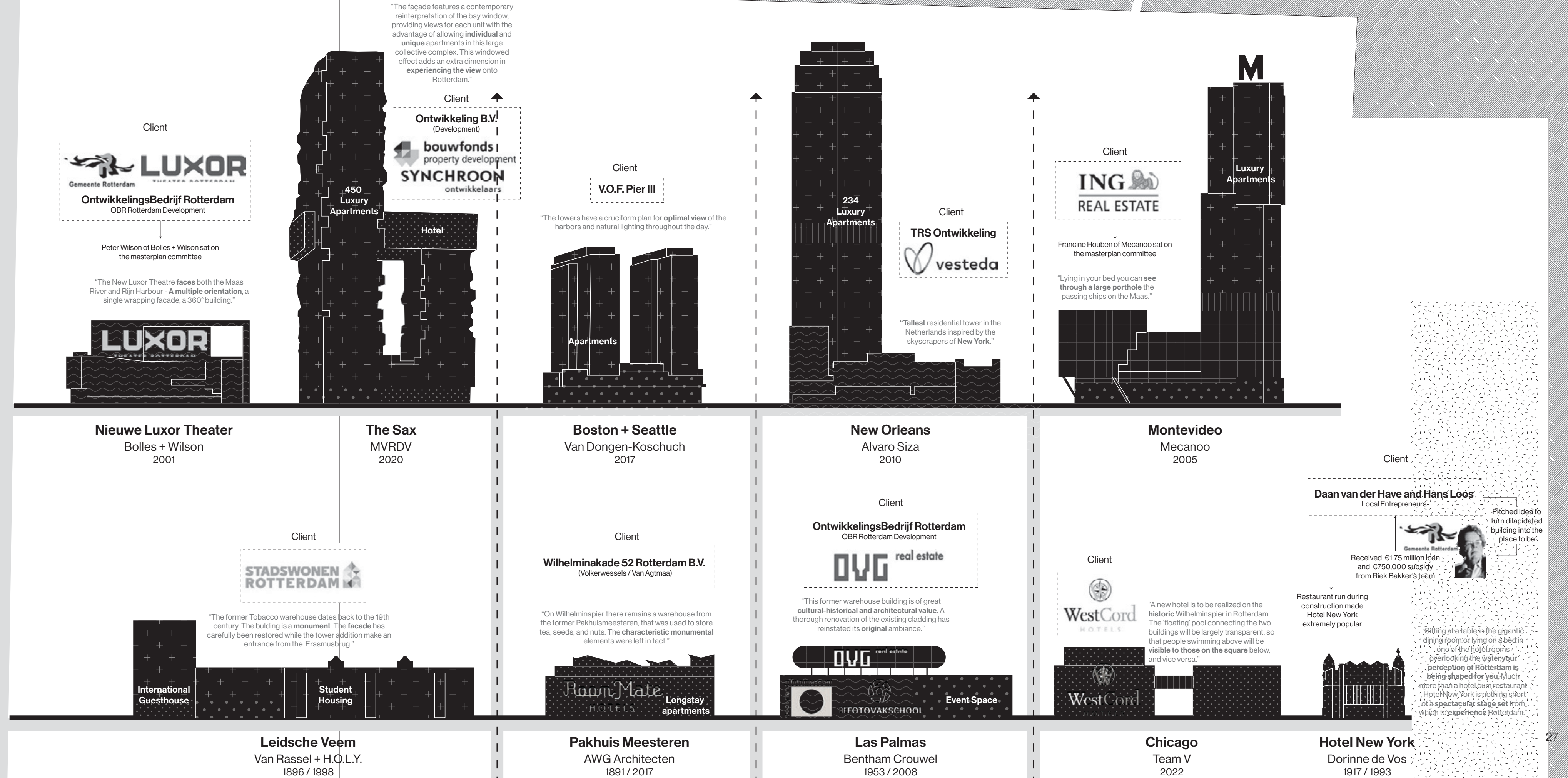
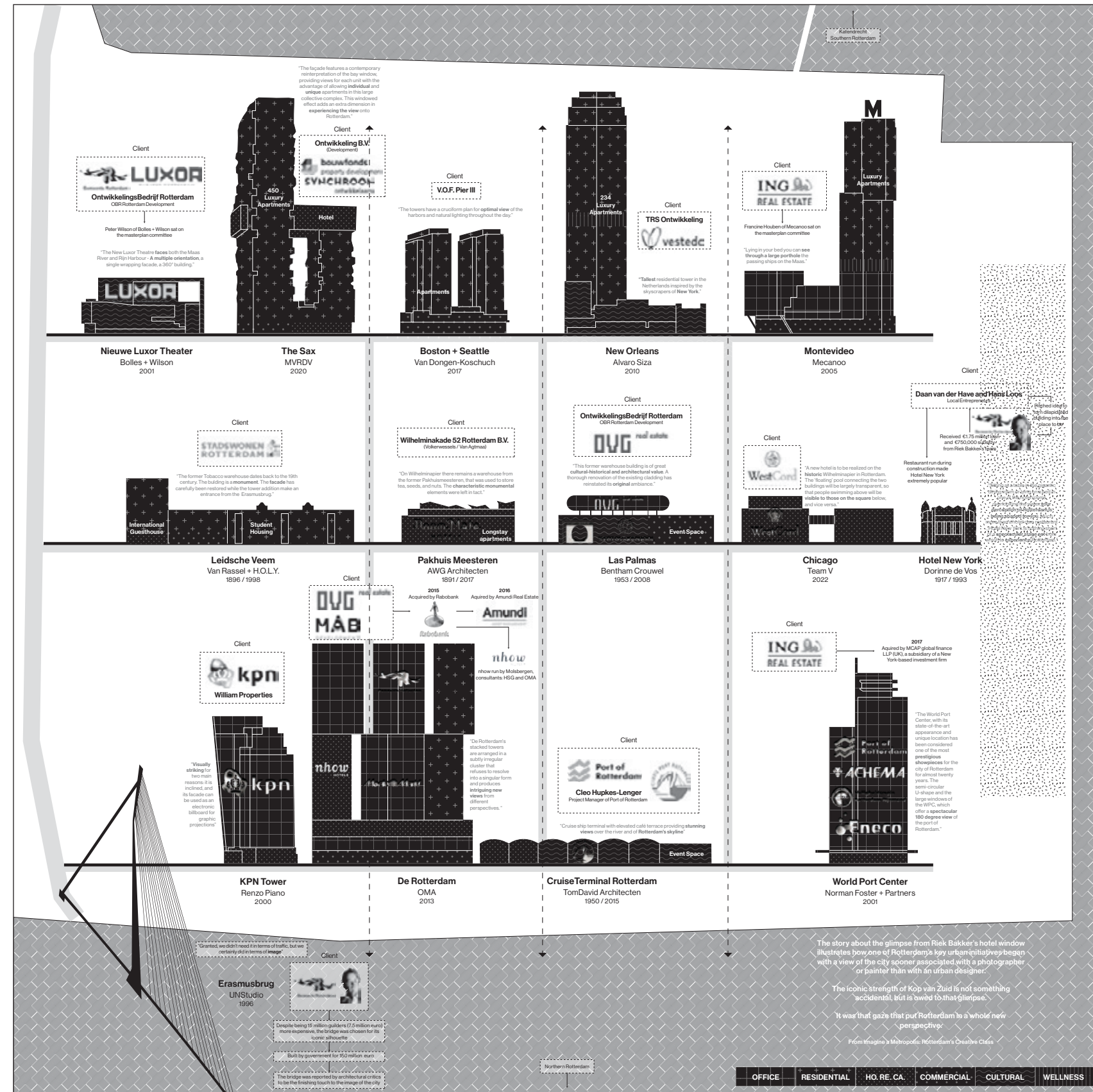
Kop van Zuid



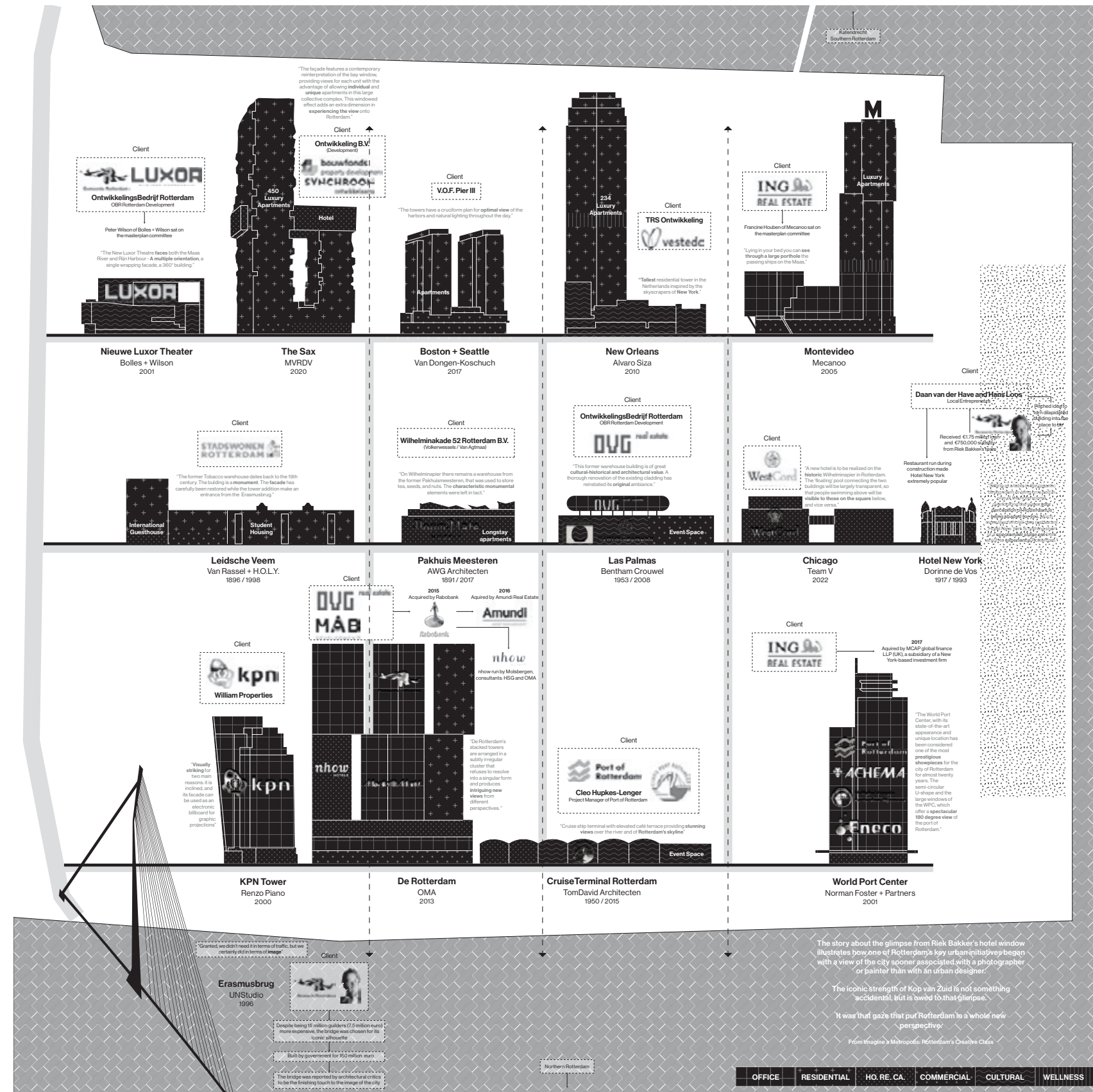
Wilhelminapier



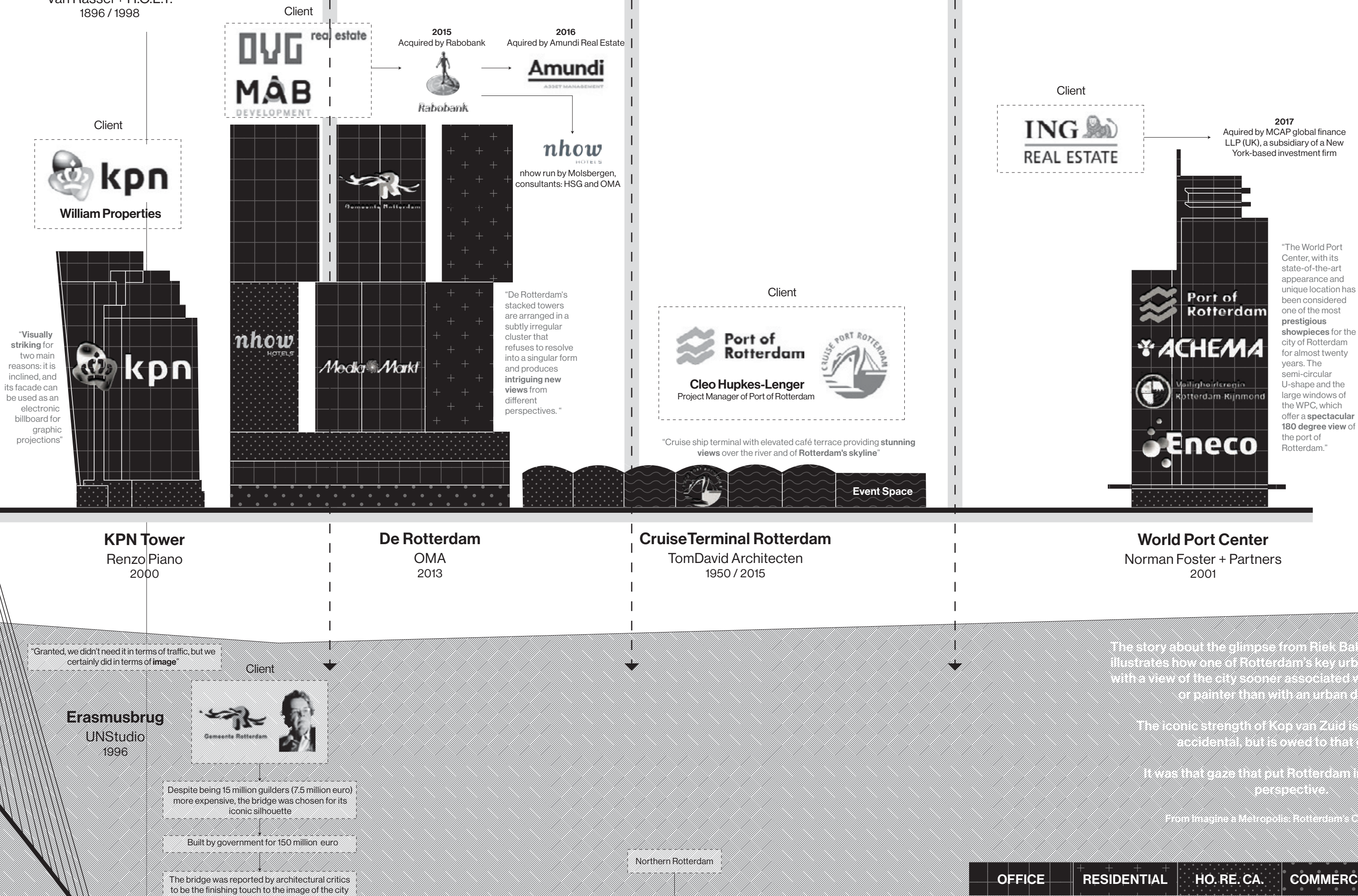


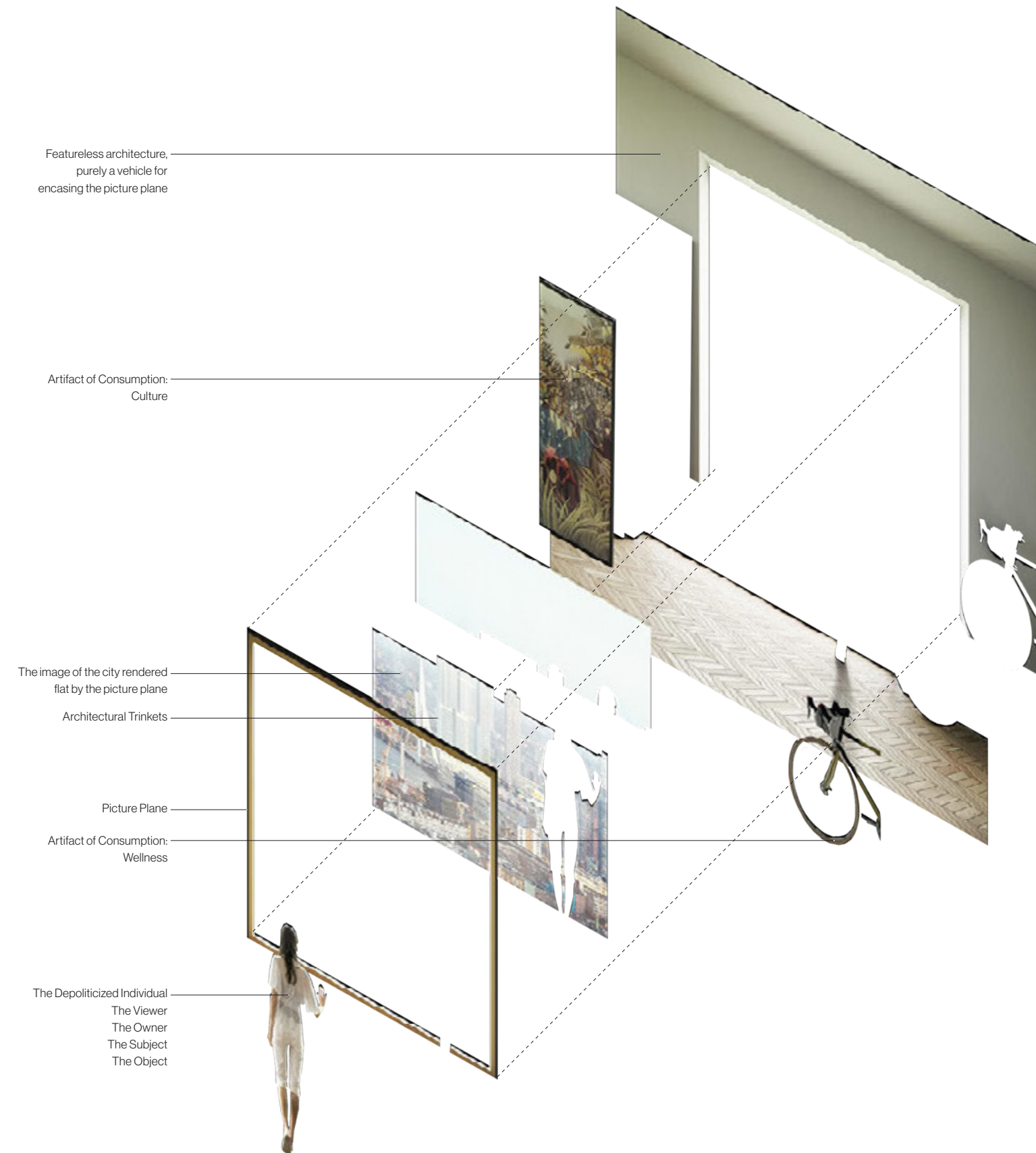
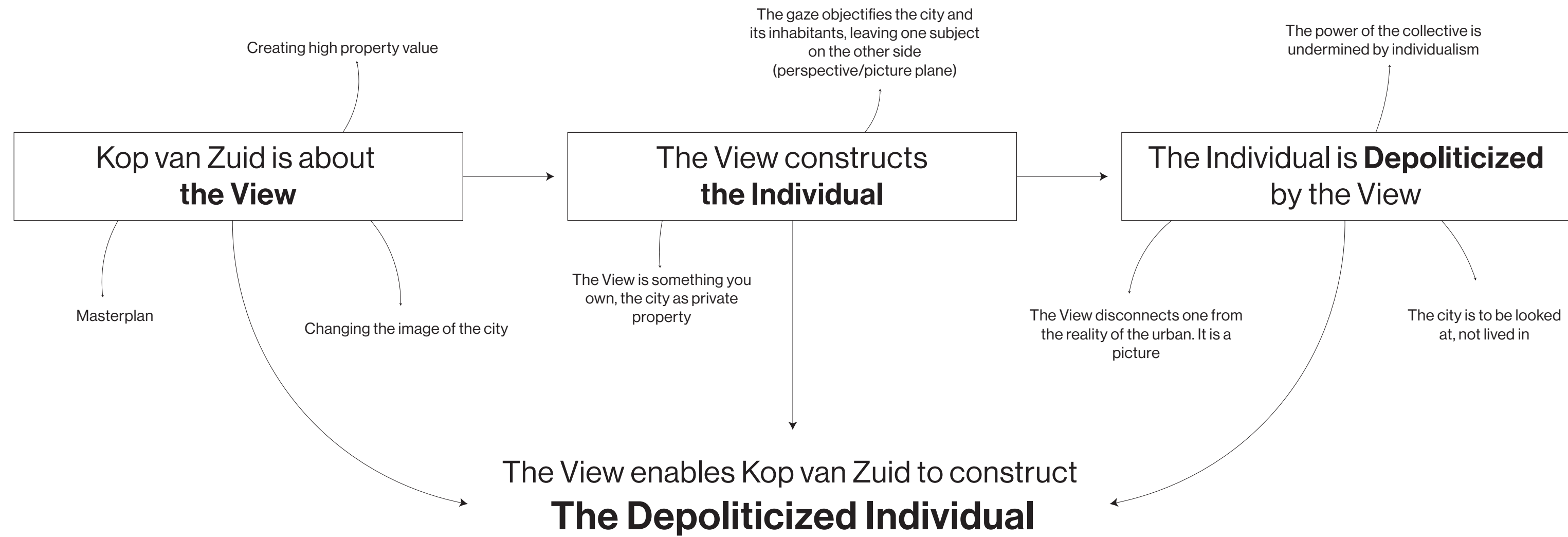


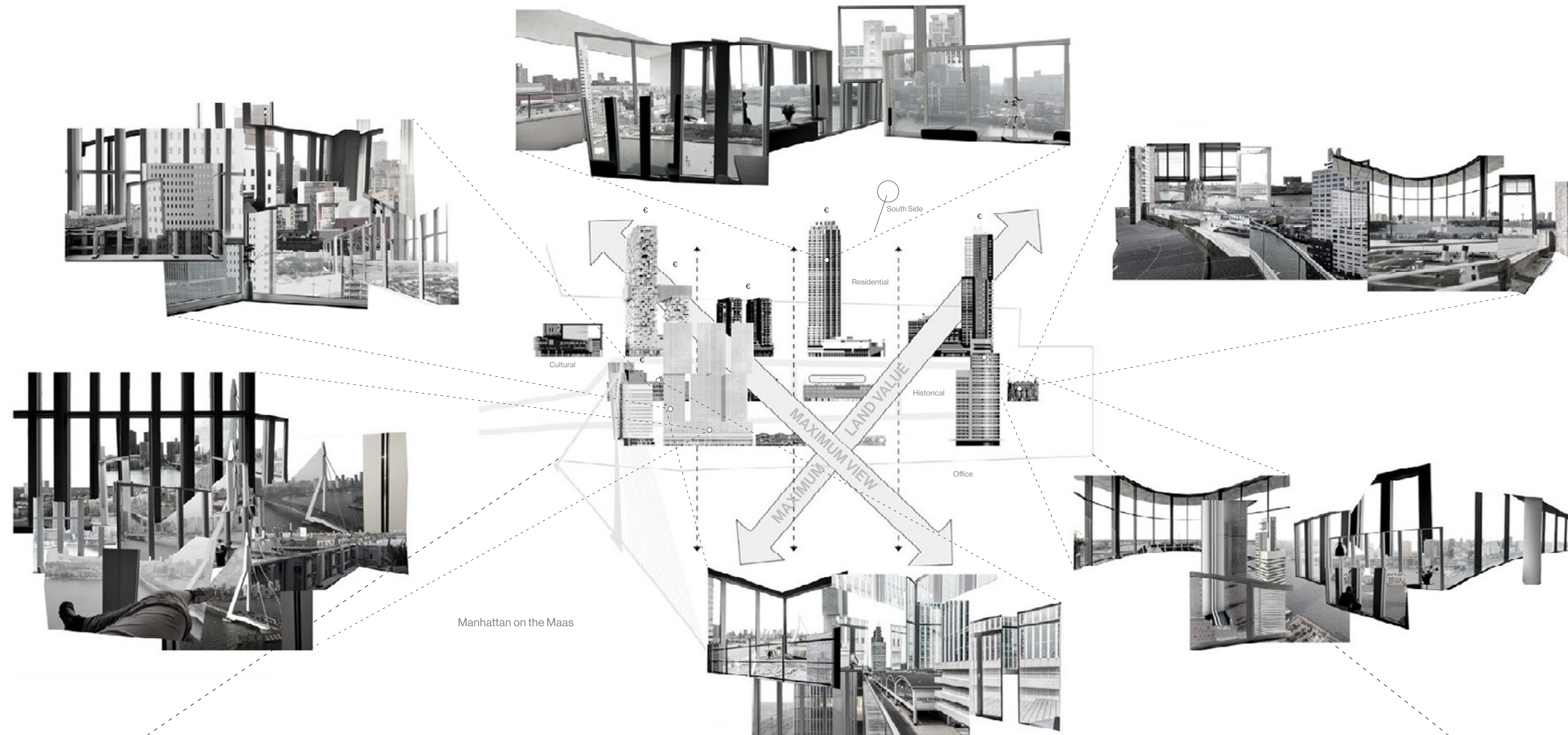
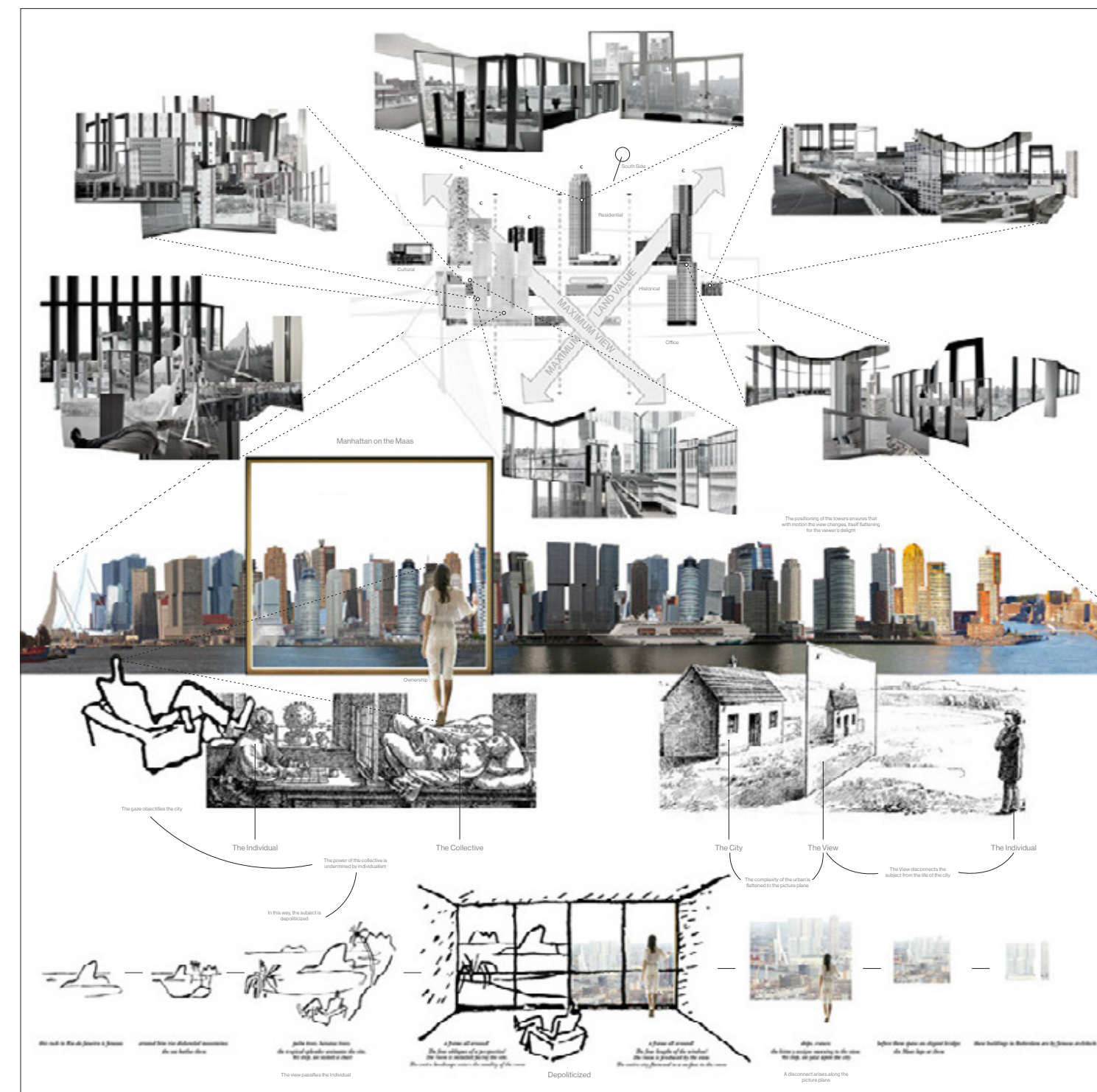
Kop van Zuid: Economic Elevation

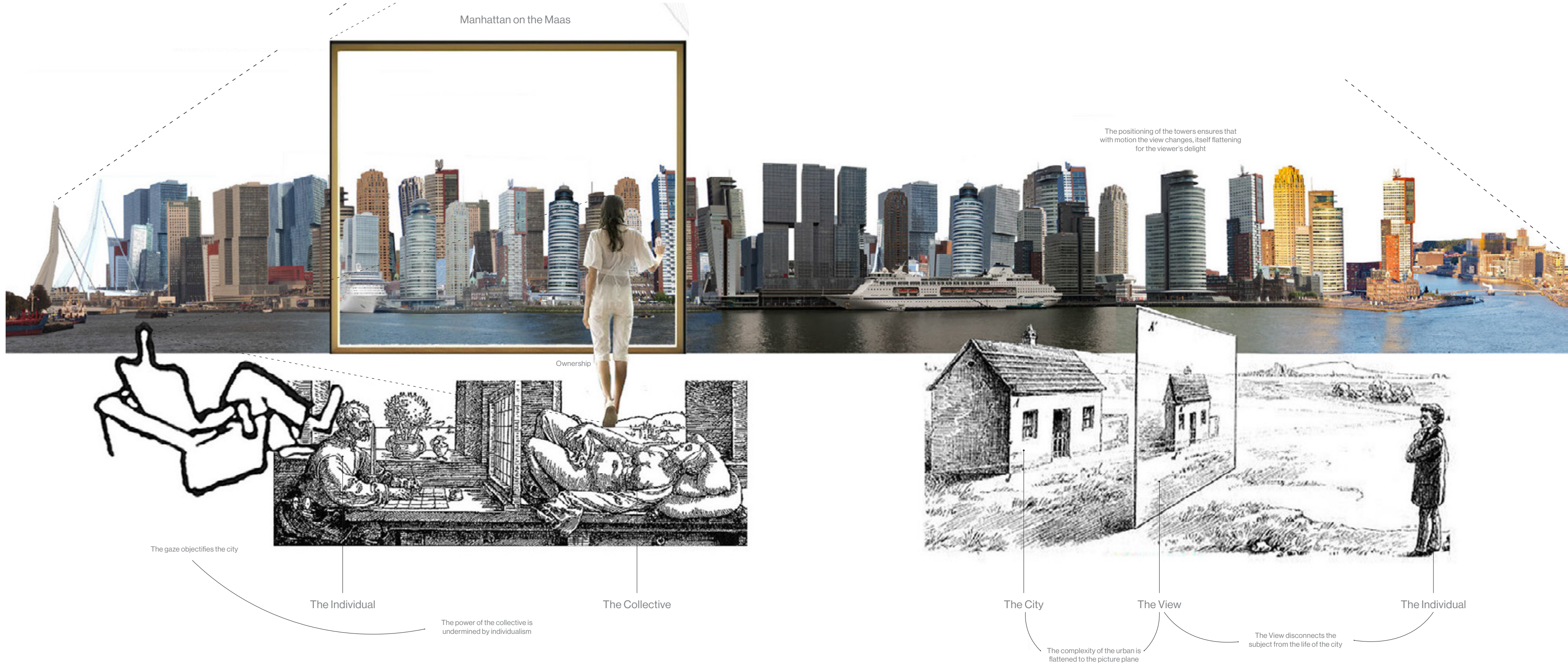
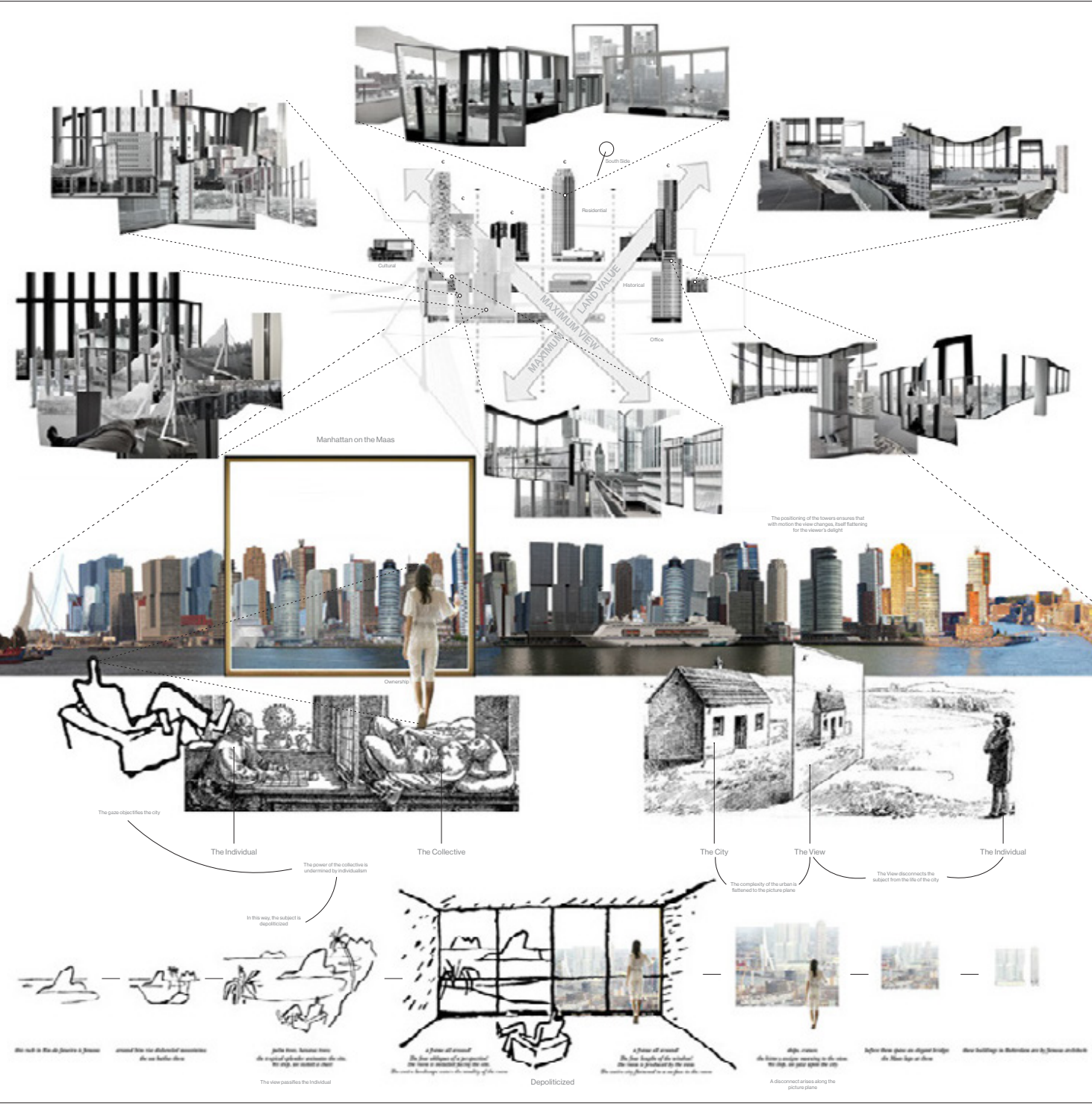


Leidsche Veem
Van Rassel + H.O.L.Y.
1896 / 1998









Capital Imaginaries: Kop van Zuid

The Depoliticized Individual

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password: hanneke











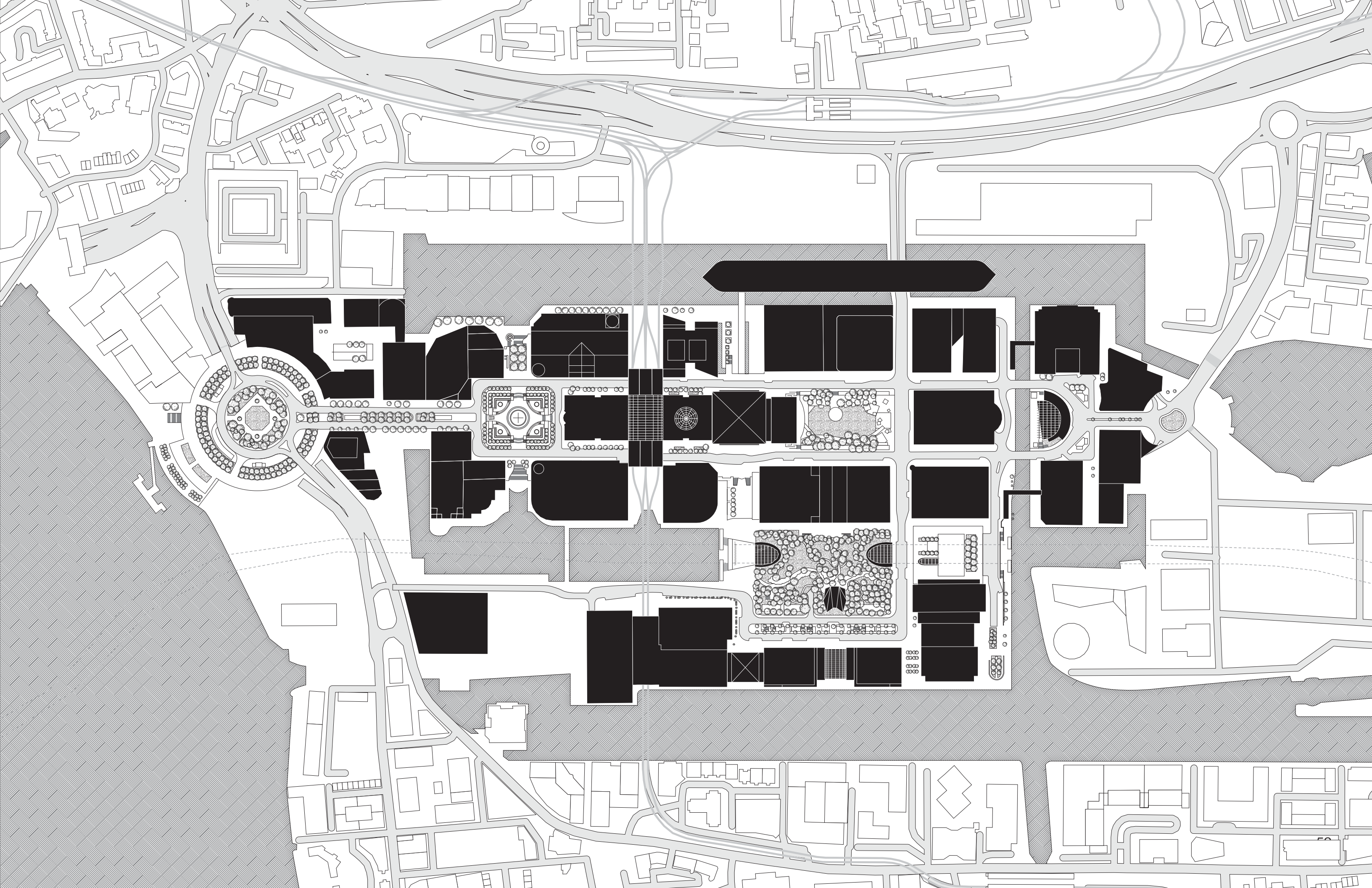
Canary Wharf
The Uncritical Laborer

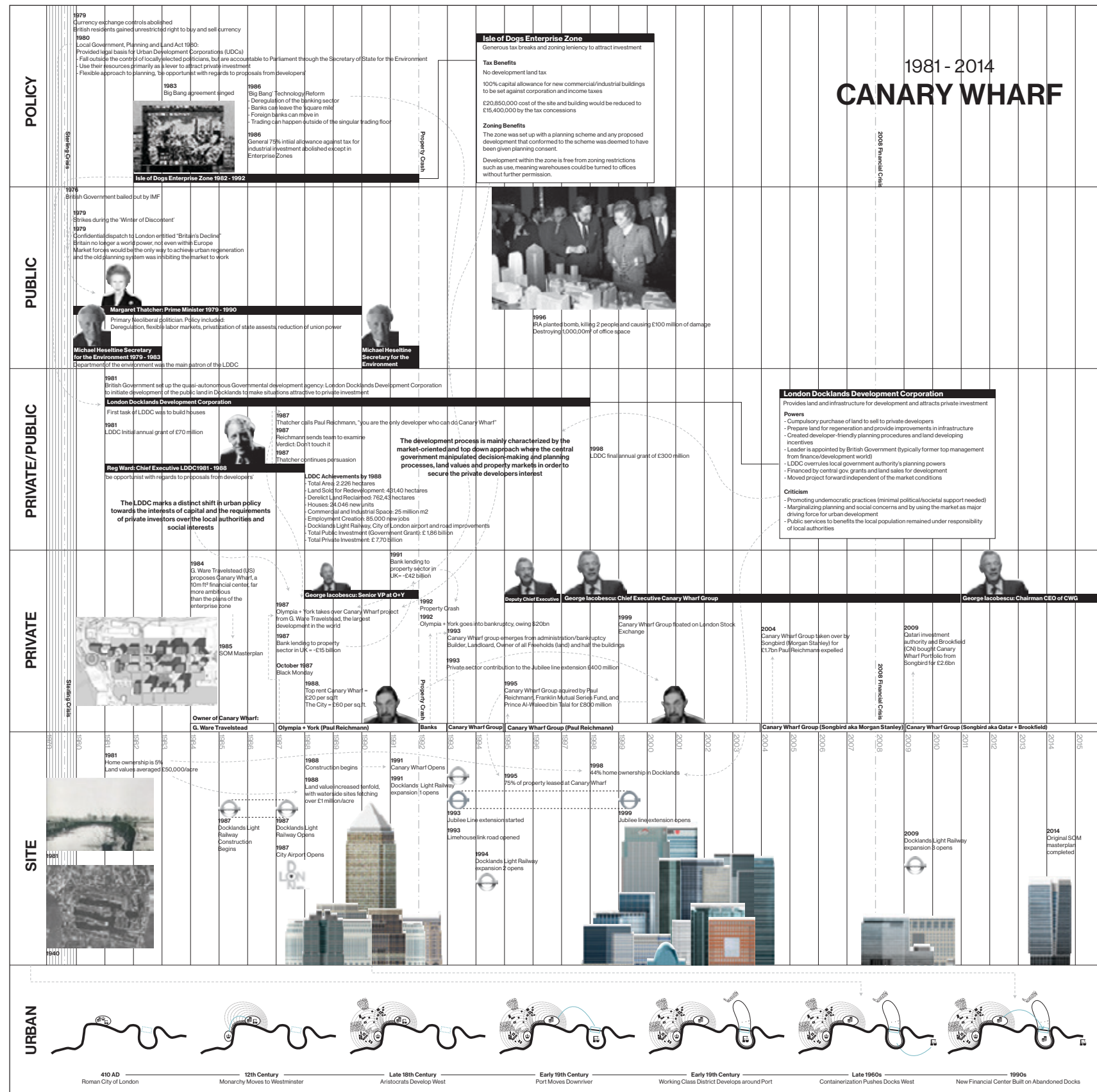


London



East End





1981 - 2014 CANARY WHARF

POLICY

1979
Currency exchange controls abolished
British residents gained unrestricted right to buy and sell currency

1980
Local Government, Planning and Land Act 1980:
Provided legal basis for Urban Development Corporations (UDCs)
- Fall outside the control of locally elected politicians, but are accountable to Parliament through the Secretary of State for the Environment
- Use their resources primarily as a lever to attract private investment
- Flexible approach to planning, 'be opportunistic with regards to proposals from developers'

1983
Big Bang agreement signed



Isle of Dogs Enterprise Zone 1982 - 1992

1986
'Big Bang' Technology Reform
- Deregulation of the banking sector
- Banks can leave the 'square mile'
- Foreign banks can move in
- Trading can happen outside of the singular trading floor

1986
General 75% initial allowance against tax for industrial investment abolished except in Enterprise Zones

Property Crash

1976
British Government bailed out by IMF

1979
Strikes during the 'Winter of Discontent'

1979
Confidential dispatch to London entitled "Britain's Decline"
Britain no longer a world power, not even within Europe
Market forces would be the only way to achieve urban regeneration and the old planning system was inhibiting the market to work



Margaret Thatcher: Prime Minister 1979 - 1990
Primary Neoliberal politician. Policy included:
Deregulation, flexible labor markets, privatization of state assets, reduction of union power

Michael Heseltine Secretary for the Environment 1979 - 1983
Department of the environment was the main patron of the LDDC



Michael Heseltine Secretary for the Environment

PUBLIC

1981
British Government set up the quasi-autonomous Governmental development agency: London Docklands Development Corporation to initiate development of the public land in Docklands to make situations attractive to private investment

London Docklands Development Corporation

First task of LDDC was to build houses

1981
LDDC Initial annual grant of £70 million



Reg Ward: Chief Executive LDDC 1981 - 1988
'be opportunistic with regards to proposals from developers'

1987
Thatcher calls Paul Reichmann, "you are the only developer who can do Canary Wharf"
1987
Reichmann sends team to examine
Verdict: Don't touch it
1987
Thatcher continues persuasion

The development process is mainly characterized by the market-oriented and top down approach where the central government manipulated decision-making and planning processes, land values and property markets in order to secure the private developers interest

LDDC Achievements by 1988
- Total Area: 2,226 hectares
- Land Sold for Redevelopment: 431,40 hectares
- Derelict Land Reclaimed: 762,43 hectares
- Houses: 24,046 new units
- Commercial and Industrial Space: 25 million m2
- Employment Creation: 85,000 new jobs
- Docklands Light Railway, City of London airport and road improvements
- Total Public Investment (Government Grant): £ 1,86 billion
- Total Private Investment: £ 7,70 billion

The LDDC marks a distinct shift in urban policy towards the interests of capital and the requirements of private investors over the local authorities and social interests

Isle of Dogs Enterprise Zone

Generous tax breaks and zoning leniency to attract investment

Tax Benefits

No development land tax
100% capital allowance for new commercial/industrial buildings to be set against corporation and income taxes
£20,850,000 cost of the site and building would be reduced to £15,400,000 by the tax concessions

Zoning Benefits

The zone was set up with a planning scheme and any proposed development that conformed to the scheme was deemed to have been given planning consent.

Development within the zone is free from zoning restrictions such as use, meaning warehouses could be turned to offices without further permission.



1996
IRA planted bomb, killing 2 people and causing £100 million of damage
Destroying 1,000,00m² of office space

London Docklands Development Corporation

Provides land and infrastructure for development and attracts private investment

Powers

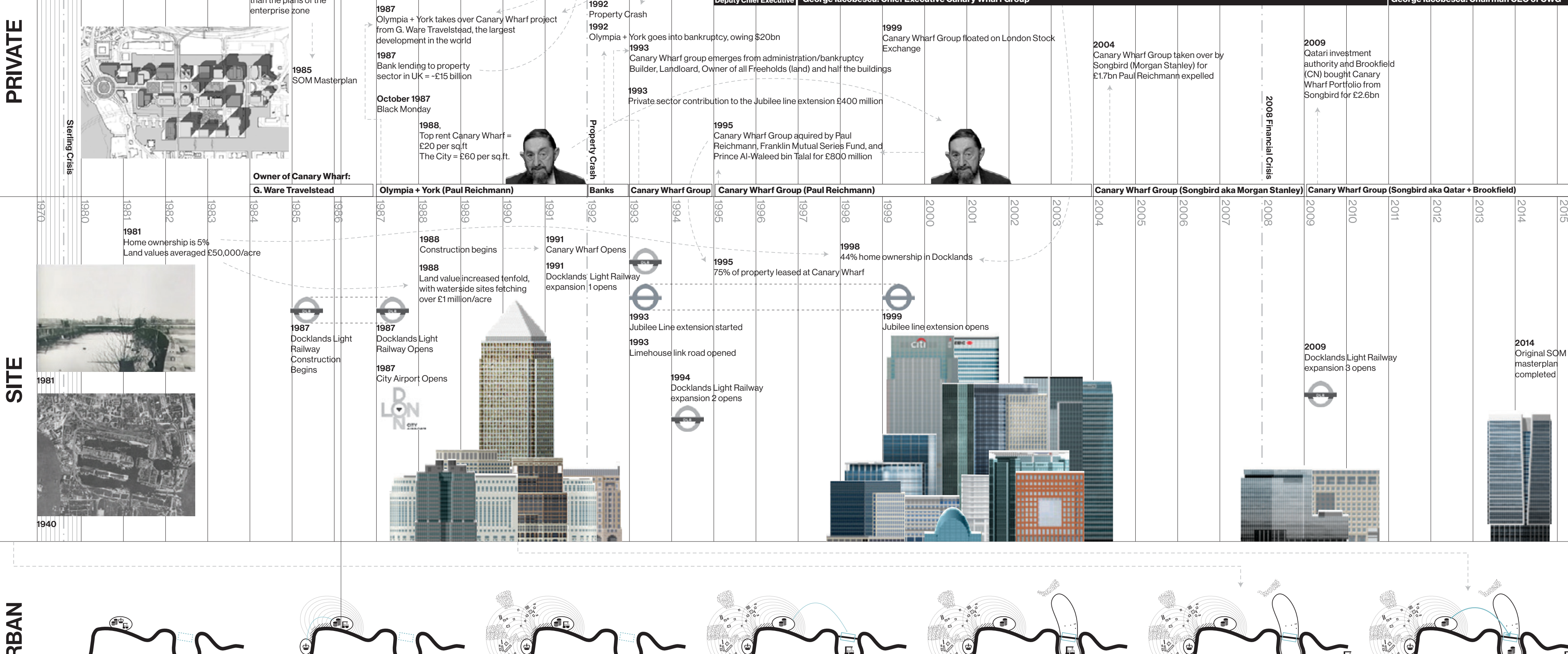
- Compulsory purchase of land to sell to private developers
- Prepare land for regeneration and provide improvements in infrastructure
- Created developer-friendly planning procedures and land developing incentives
- Leader is appointed by British Government (typically former top management from finance/development world)
- LDDC overrules local government authority's planning powers
- Financed by central gov. grants and land sales for development
- Moved project forward independent of the market conditions

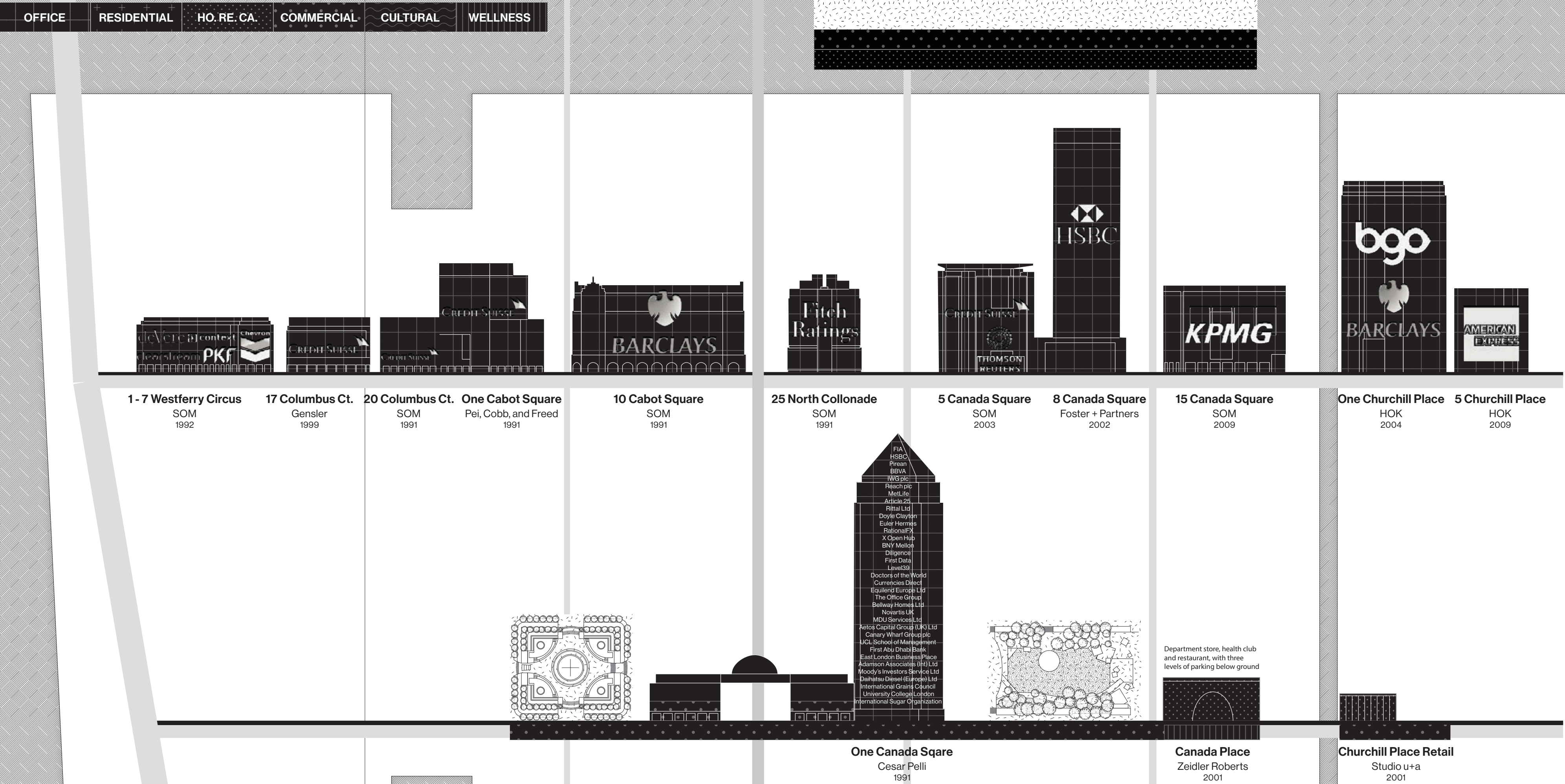
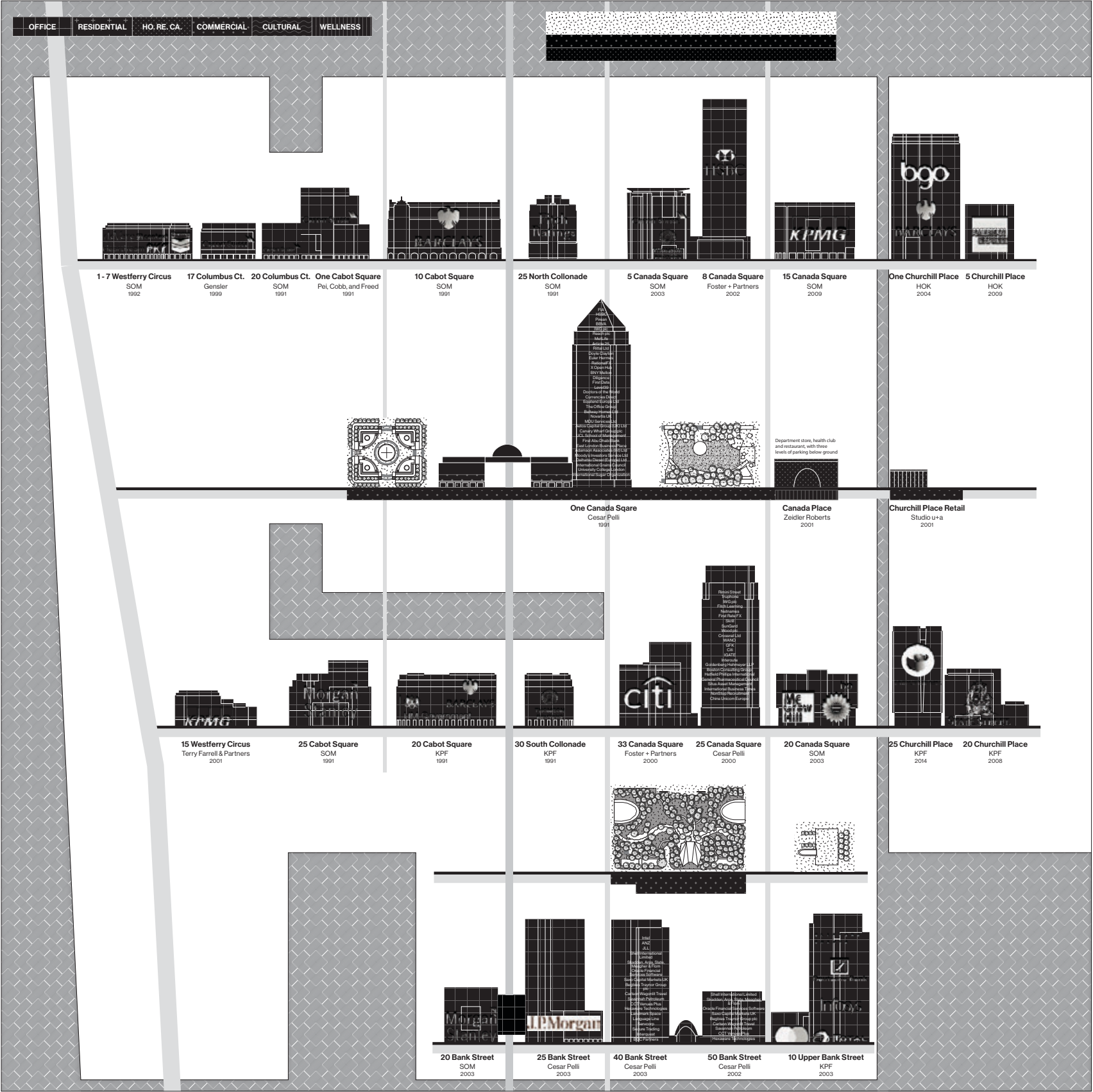
Criticism

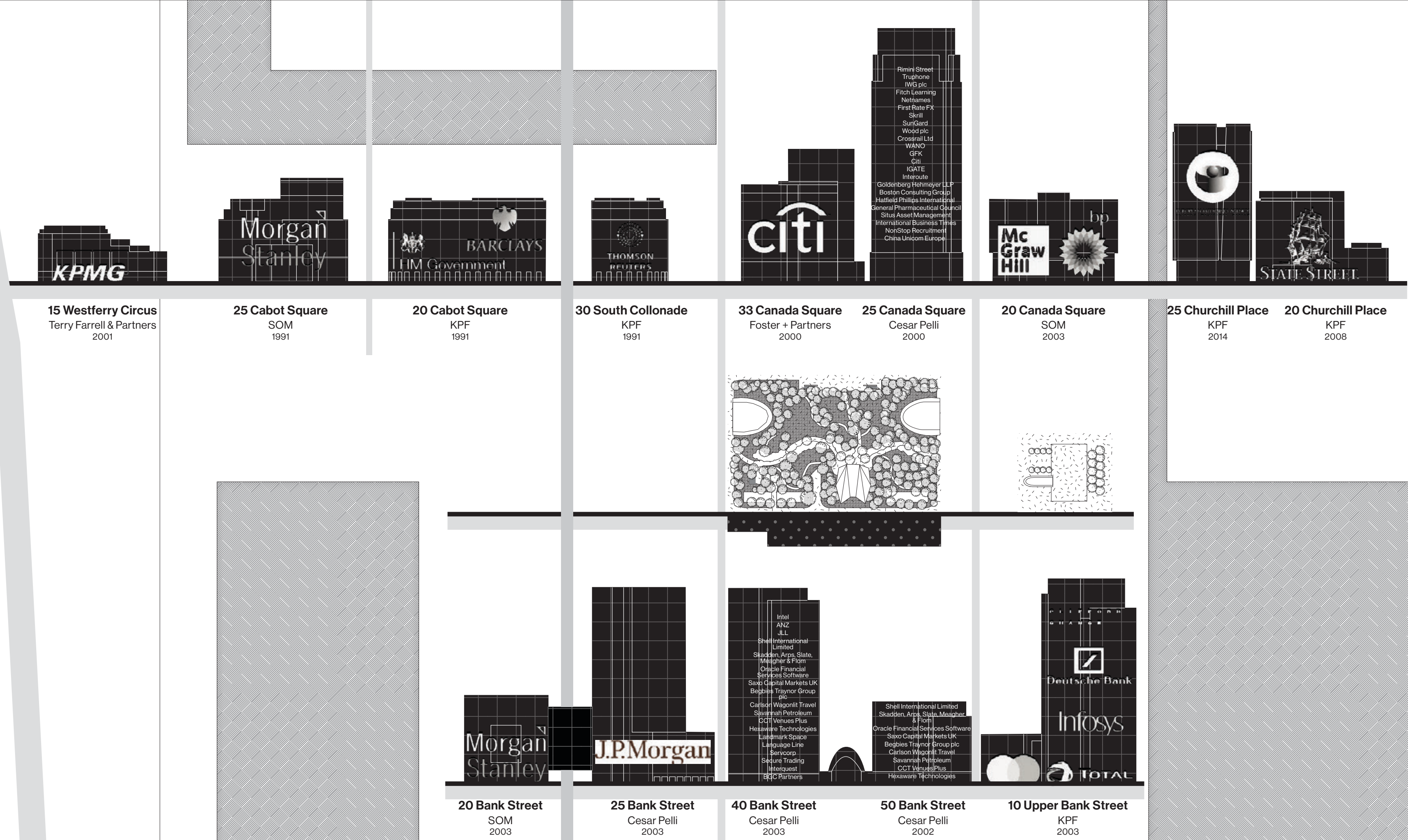
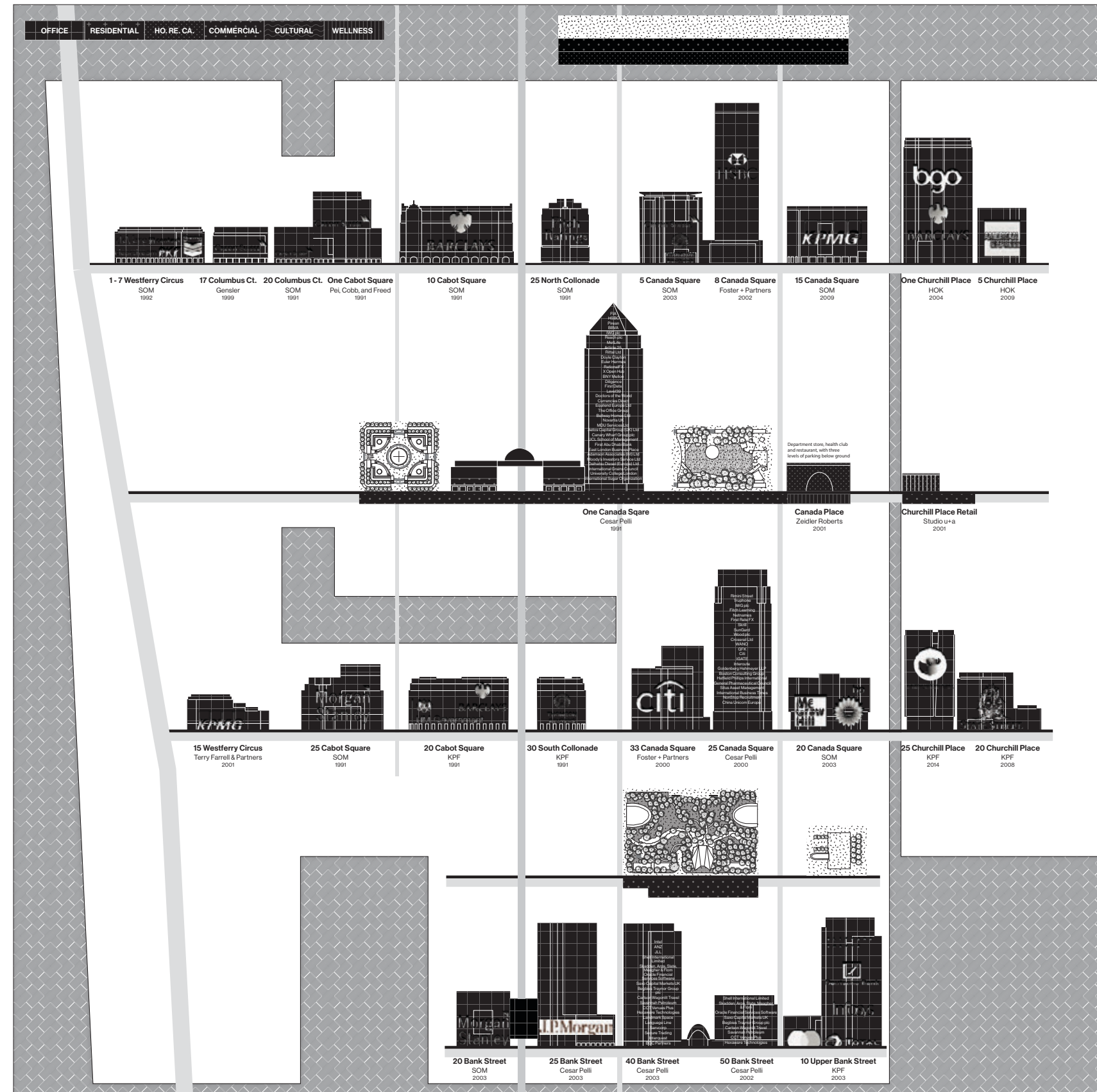
- Promoting undemocratic practices (minimal political/societal support needed)
- Marginalizing planning and social concerns and by using the market as major driving force for urban development
- Public services to benefits the local population remained under responsibility of local authorities

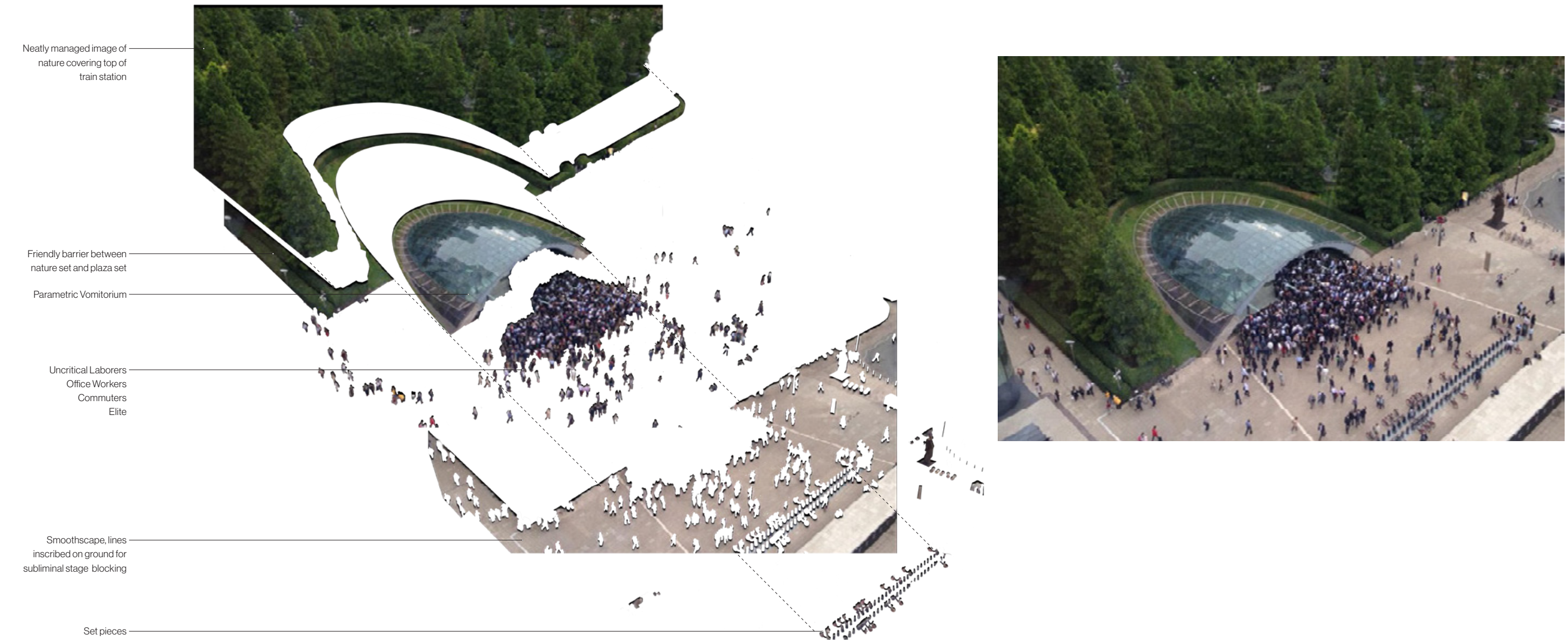
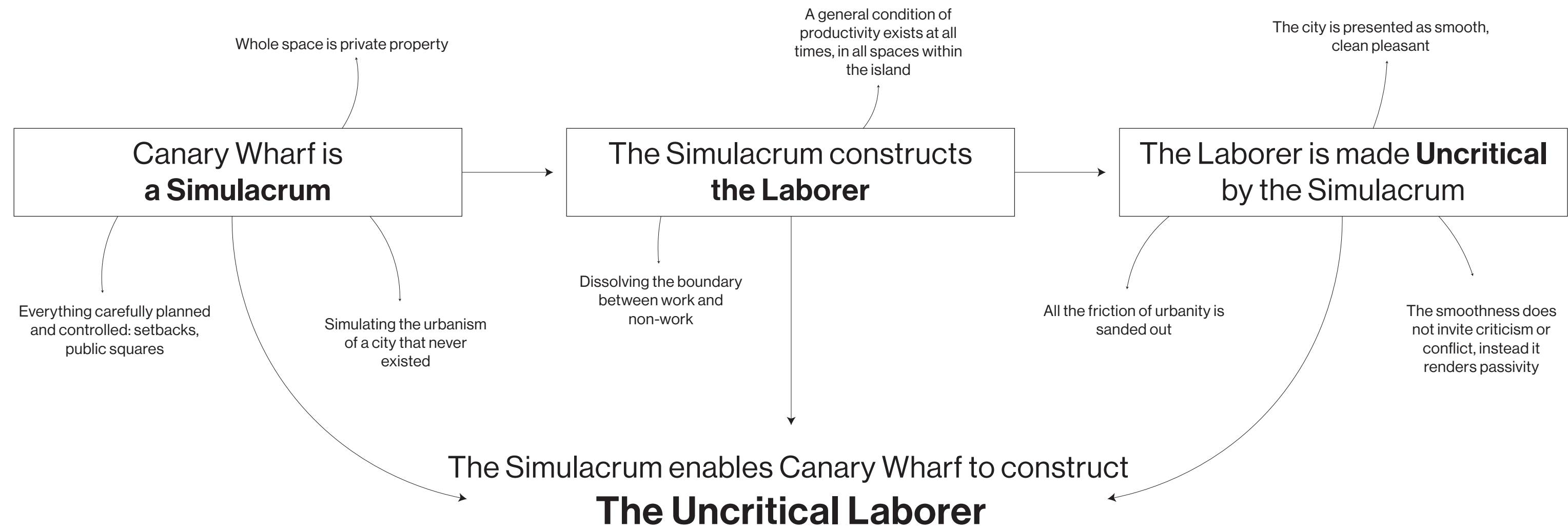
1981 - 2014 CANARY WHARF

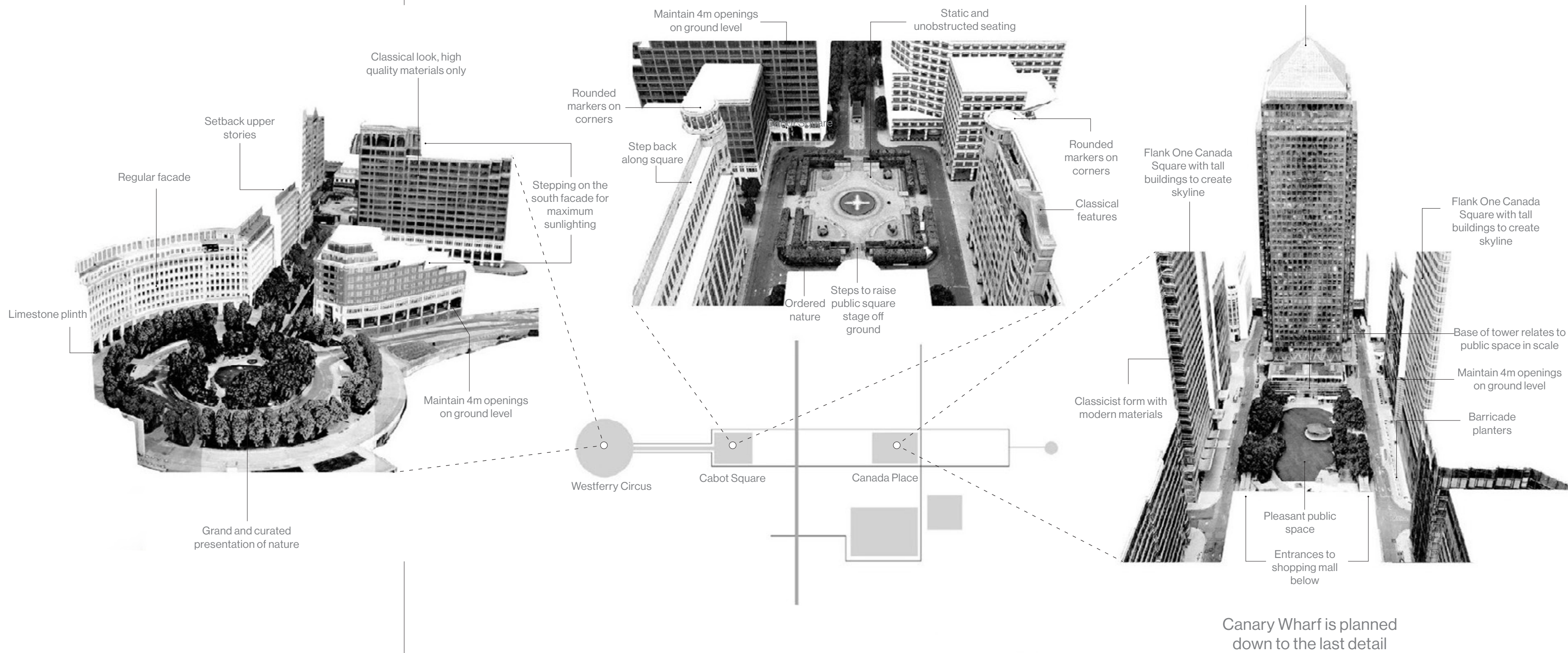
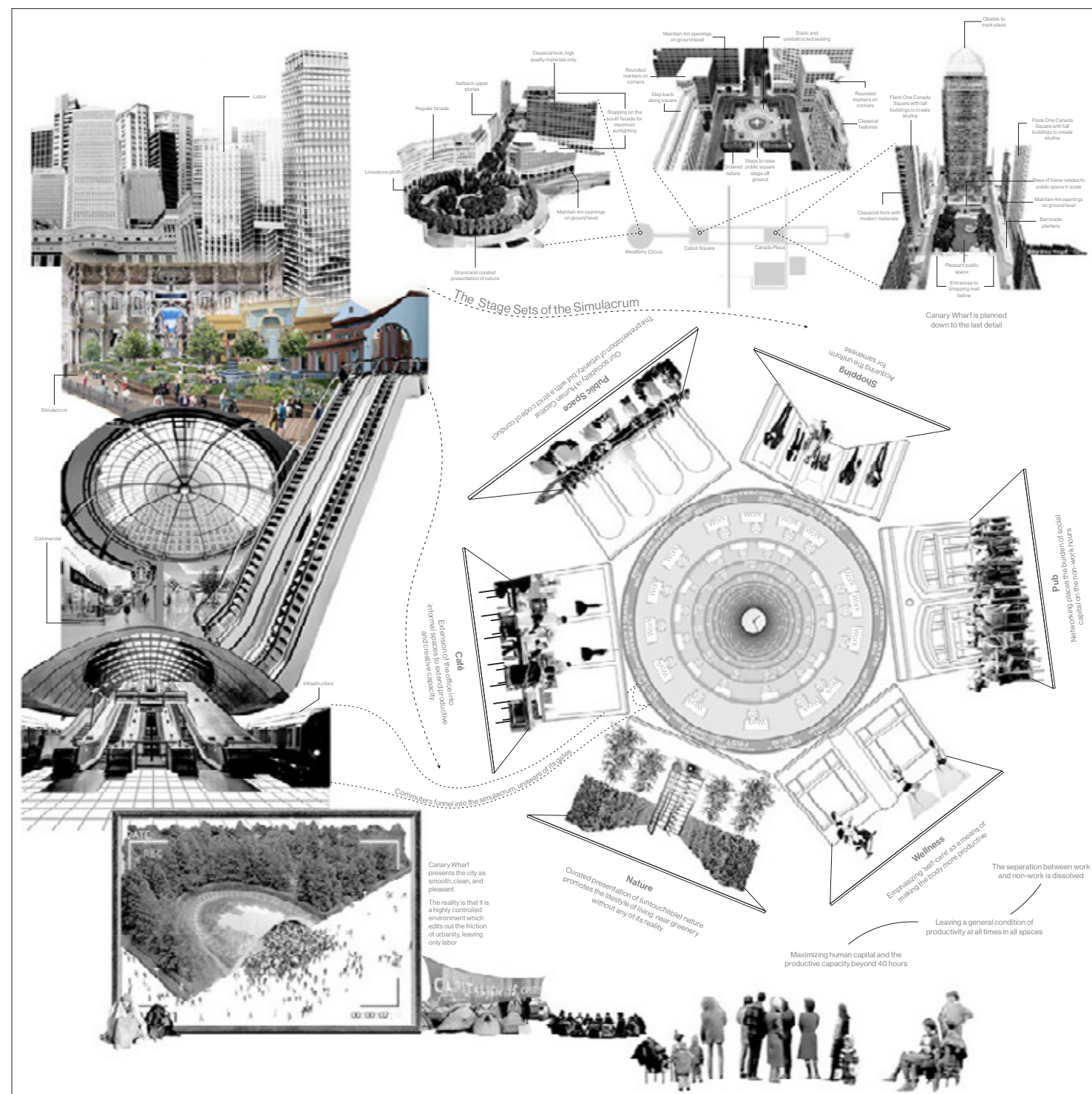
2008 Financial Crisis

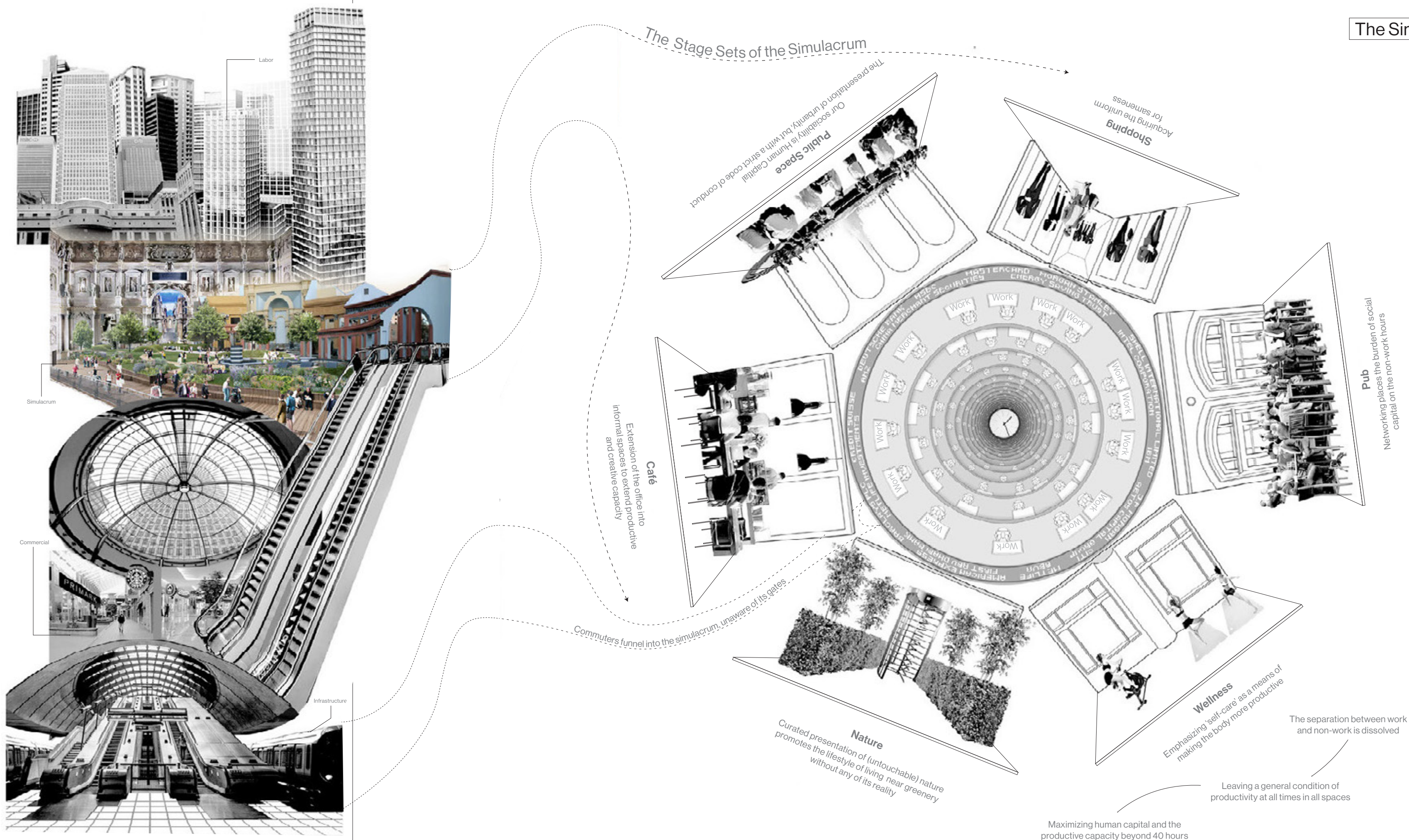
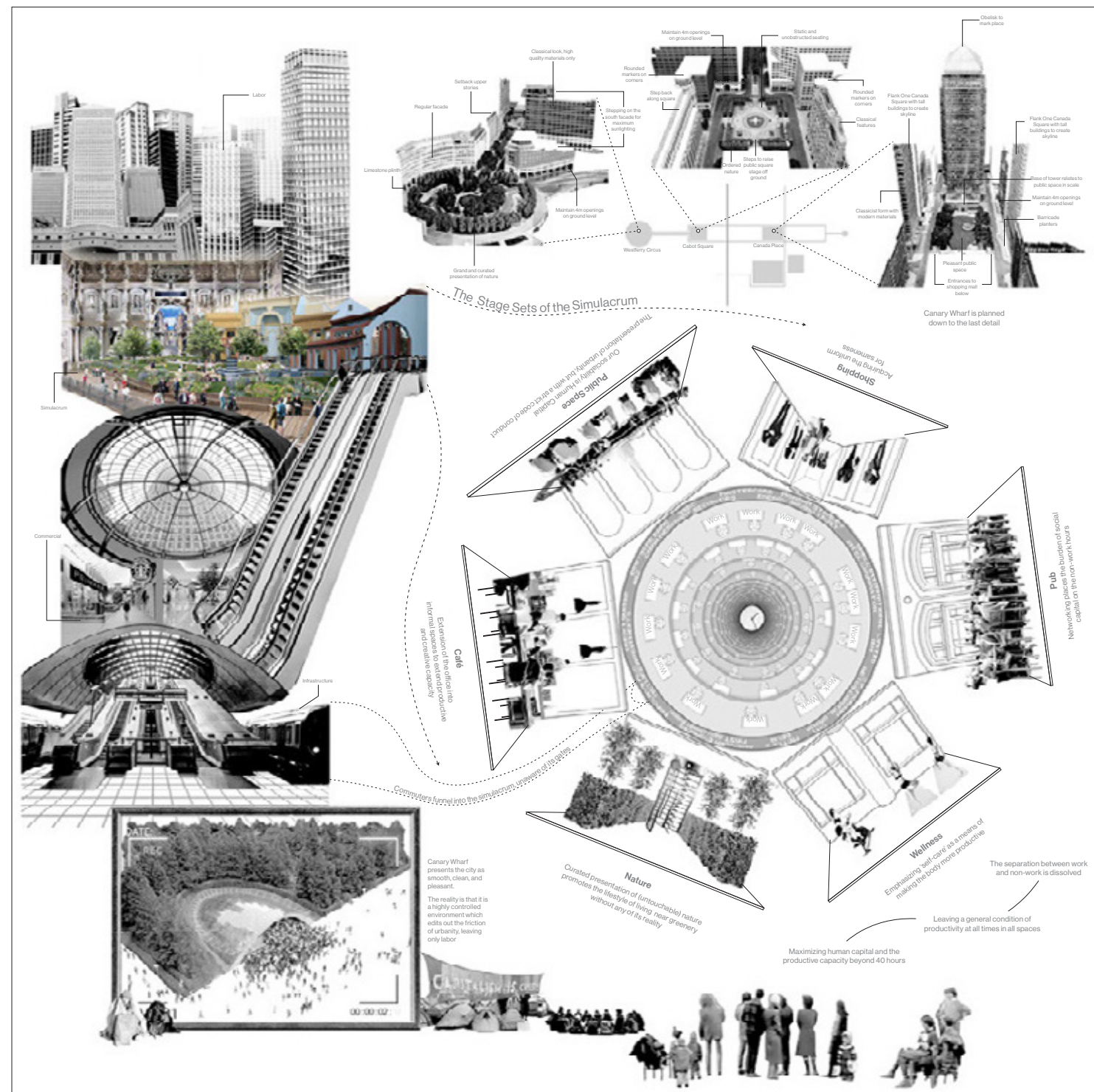


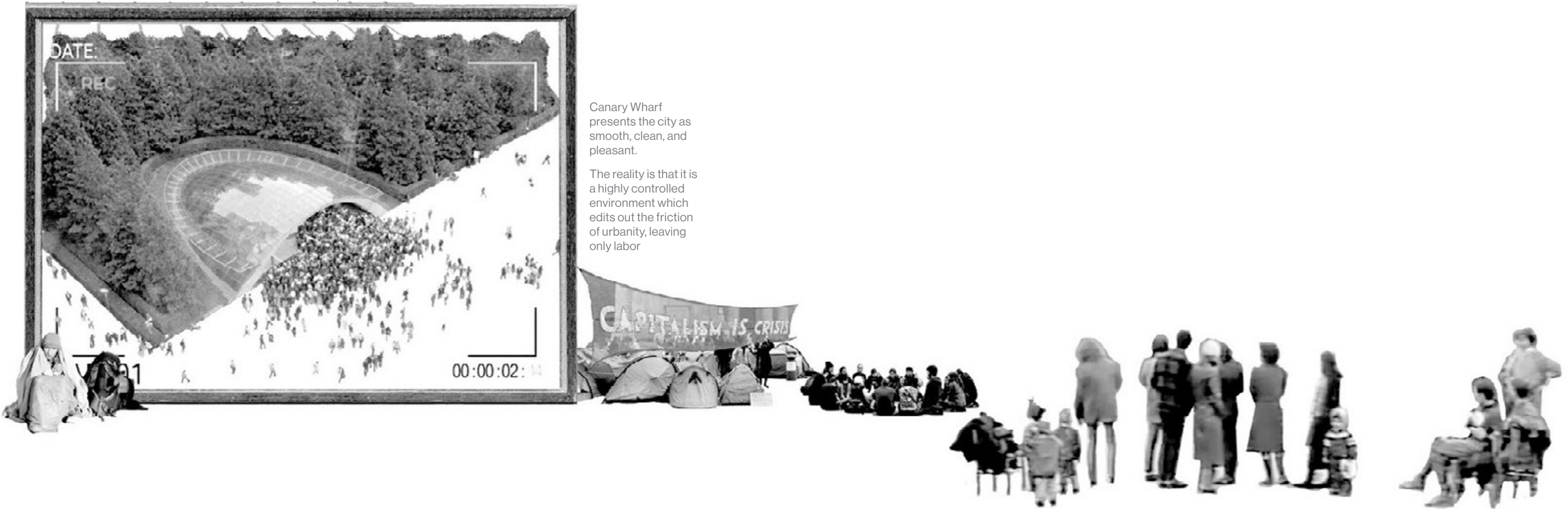
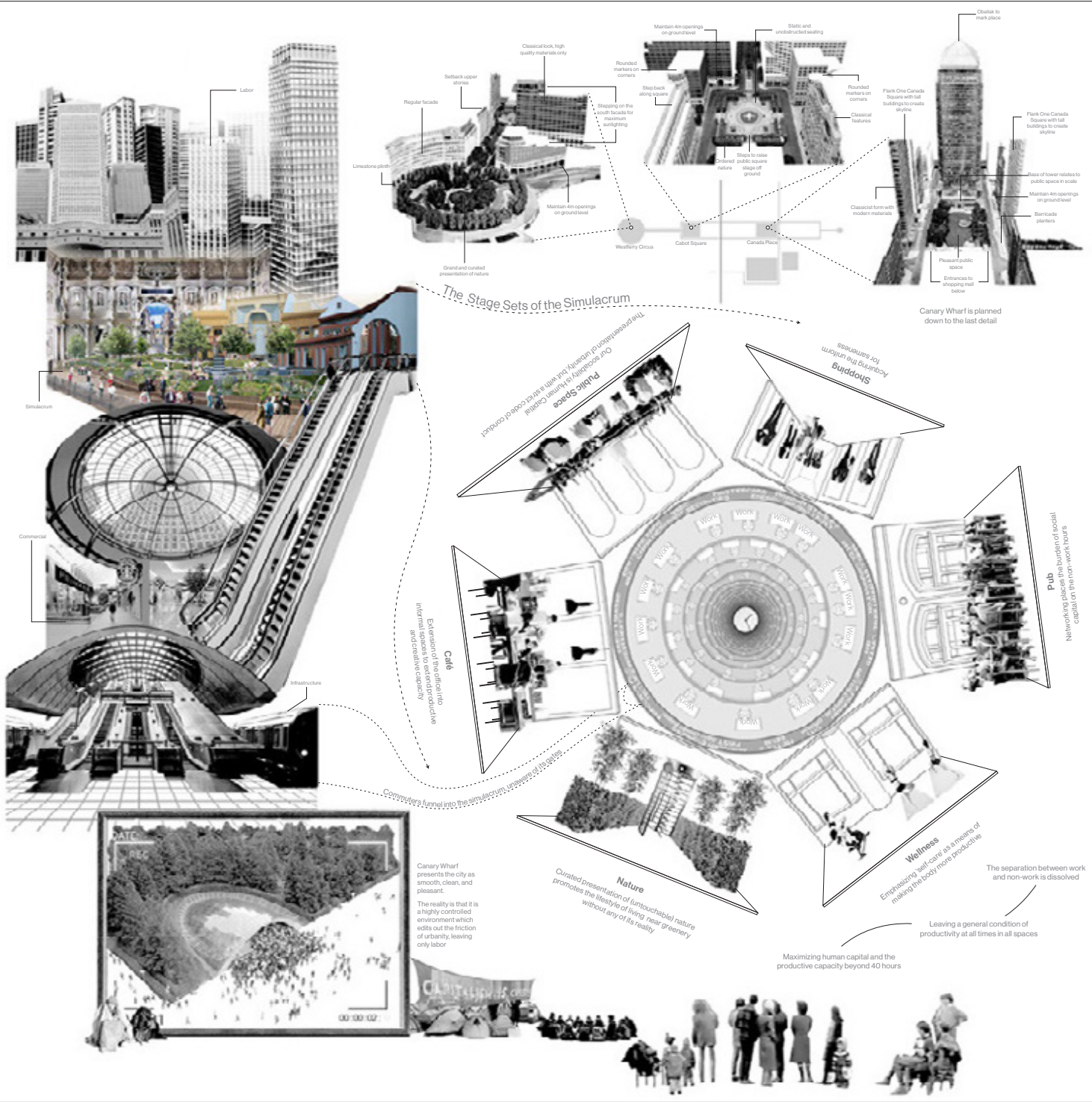










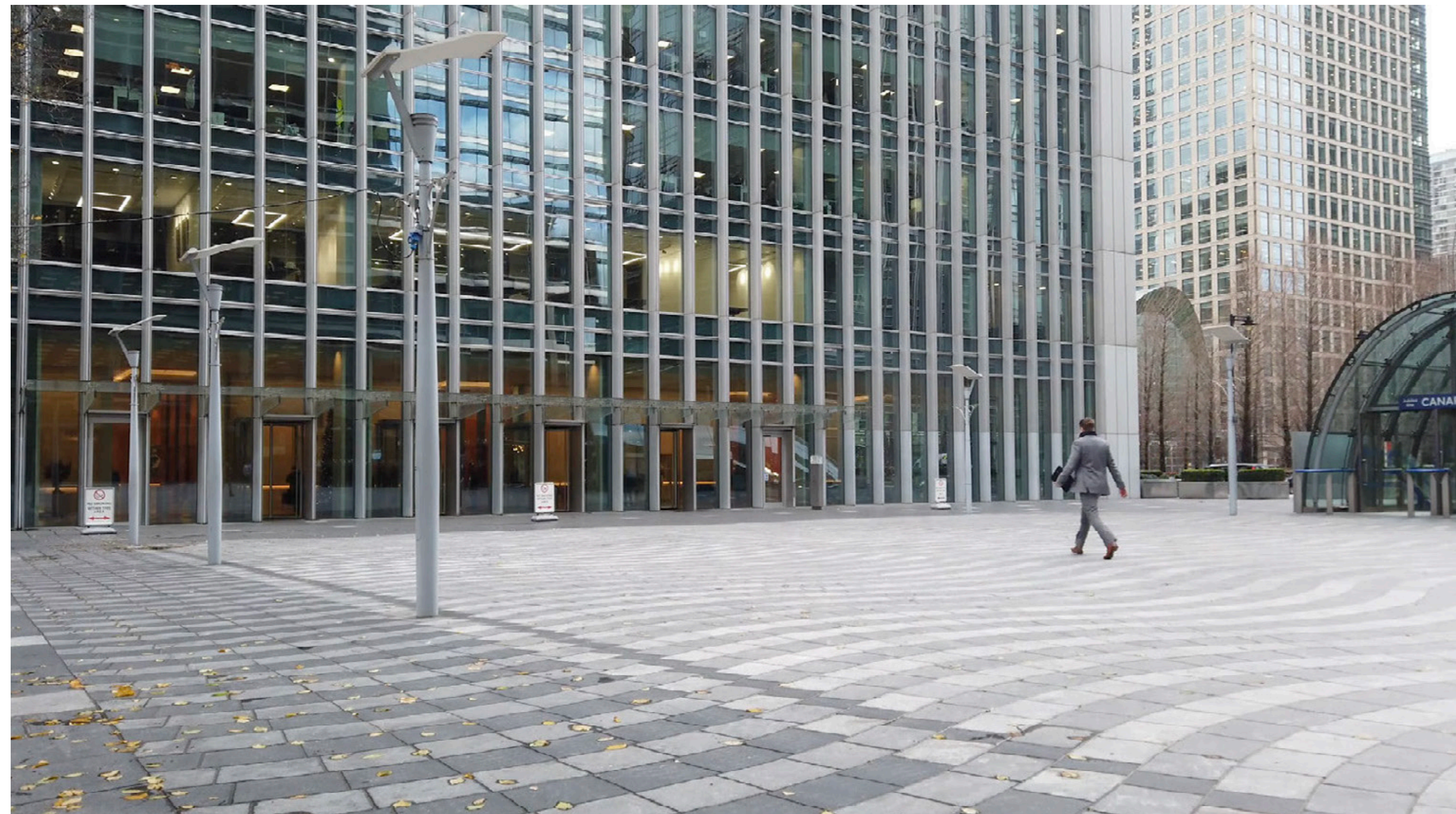


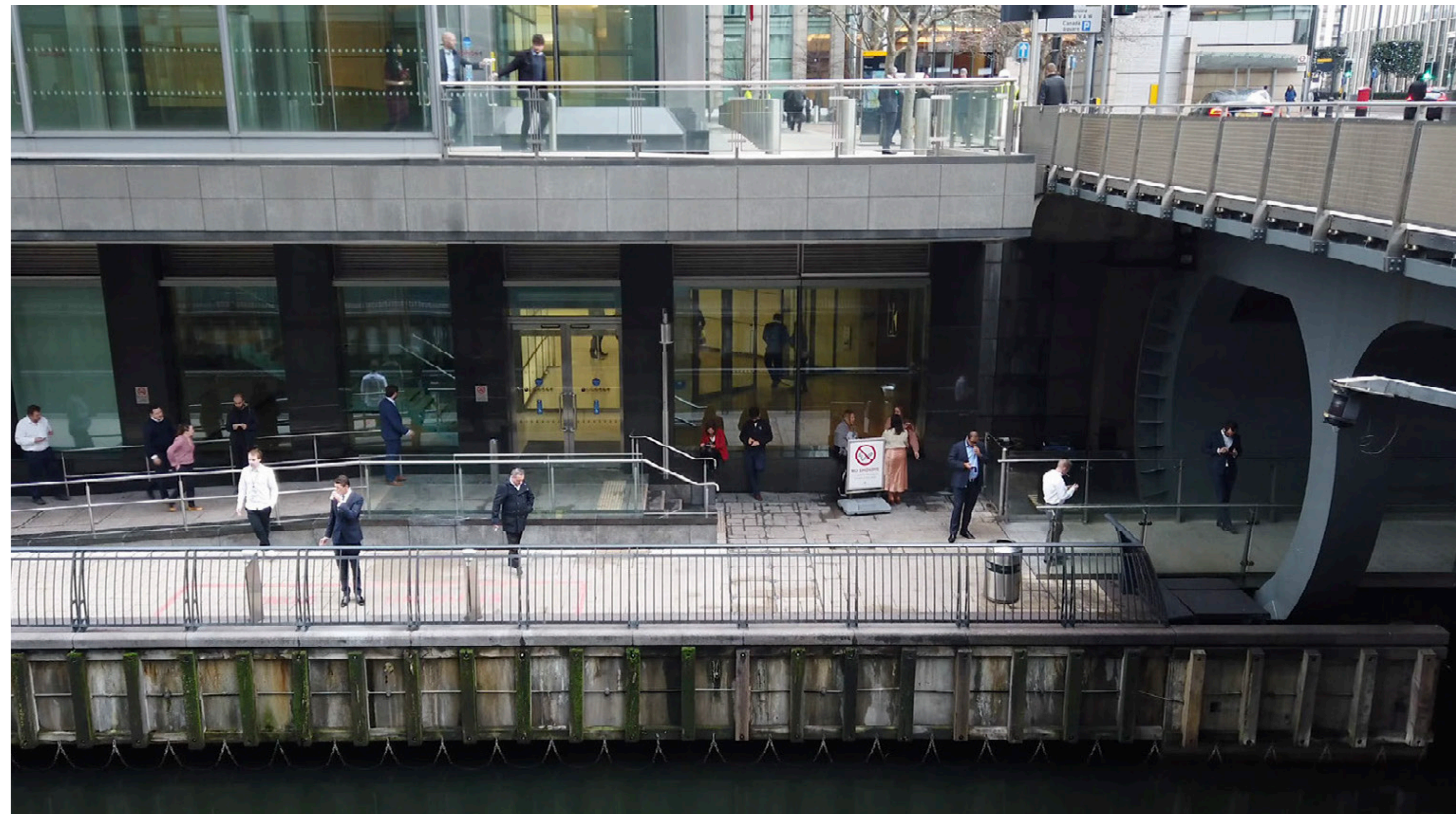
Capital Imaginaries: Canary Wharf

The Uncritical Laborer

<https://vimeo.com/383173141>

password: hanneke



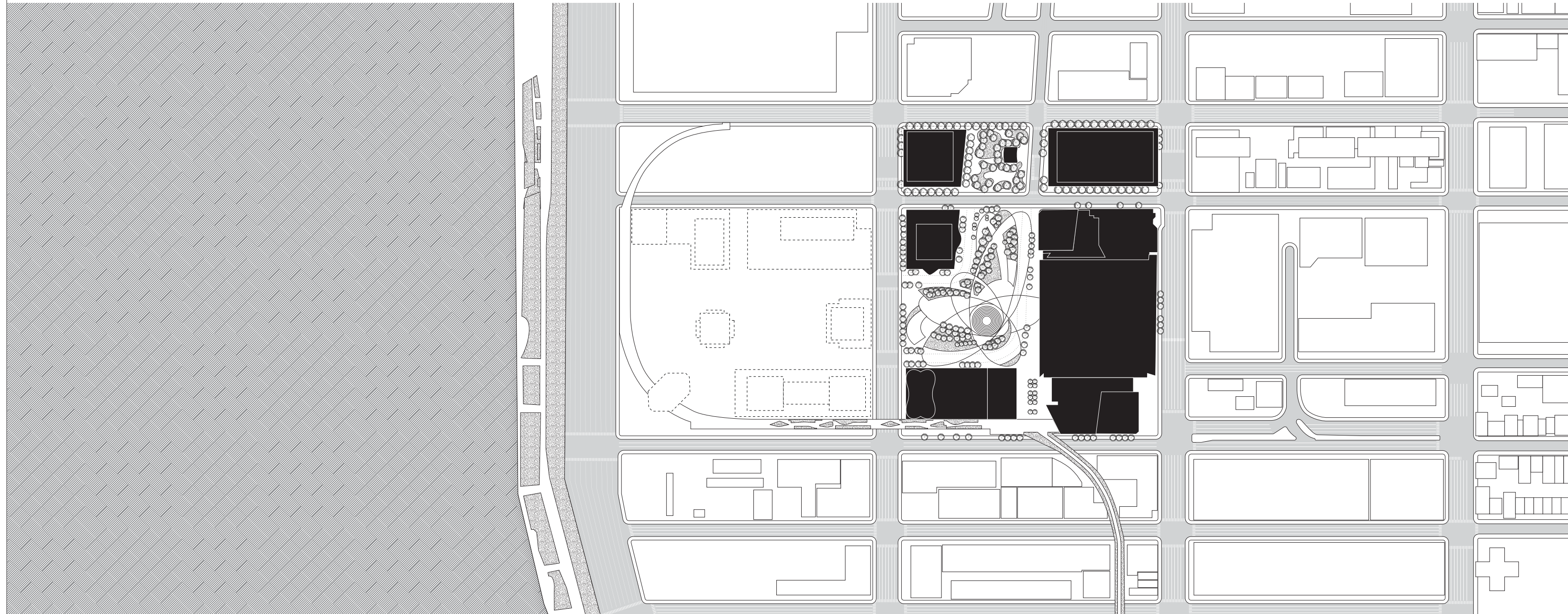
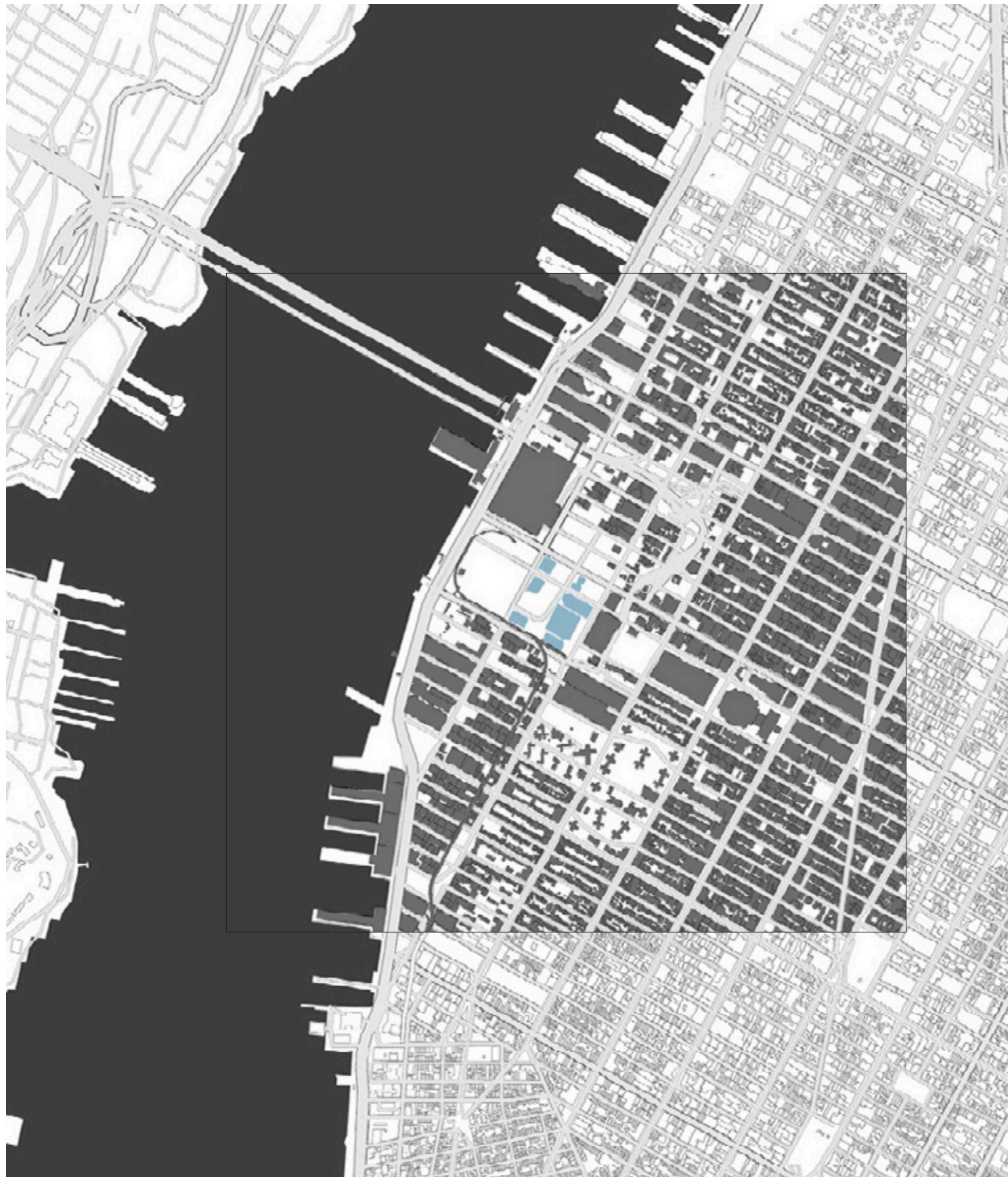






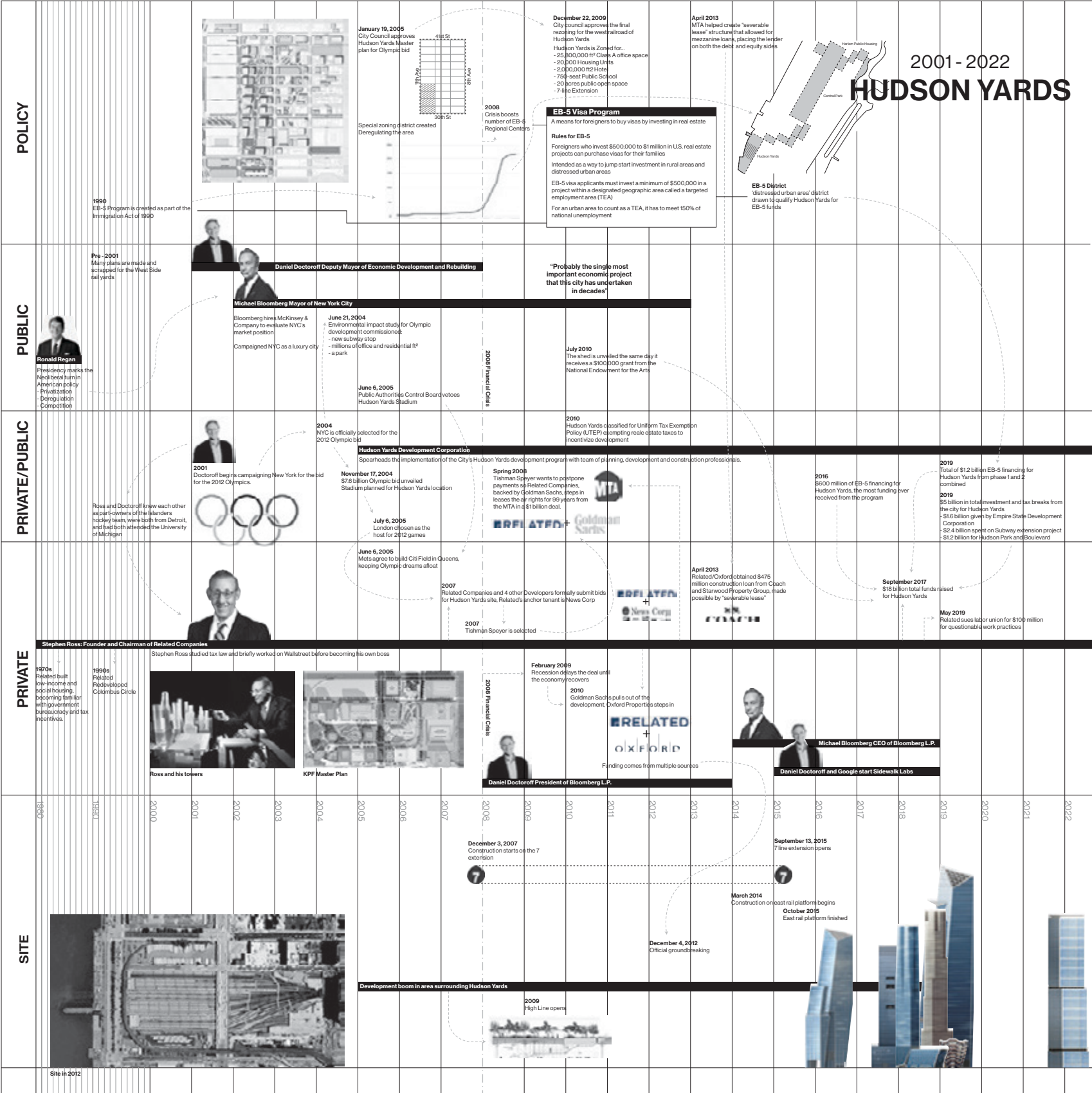


Hudson Yards
The Entertained Consumer



Hudson Yards

Hudson Yards: Timeline



POLICY

PUBLIC

PRIVATE/PUBLIC

1990
EB-5 Program is created as part of the Immigration Act of 1990

Pre-2001
Many plans are made and scrapped for the West Side rail yards

Ronald Regan
Presidency marks the Neoliberal turn in American policy
- Privatization
- Deregulation
- Competition

Ross and Doctoroff knew each other as part-owners of the Islanders hockey team, were both from Detroit, and had both attended the University of Michigan

Daniel Doctoroff Deputy Mayor of Economic Development and Rebuilding

Michael Bloomberg Mayor of New York City

Bloomberg hires McKinsey & Company to evaluate NYC's market position

Campaigned NYC as a luxury city

2001 Doctoroff begins campaigning New York for the bid for the 2012 Olympics.

2004 NYC is officially selected for the 2012 Olympic bid

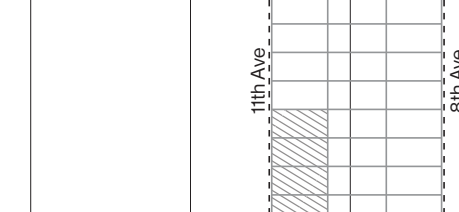
2004 Hudson Yards Development Corporation
Spearheads the implementation of the City's Hudson Yards development program with team of planning, development and construction professionals.



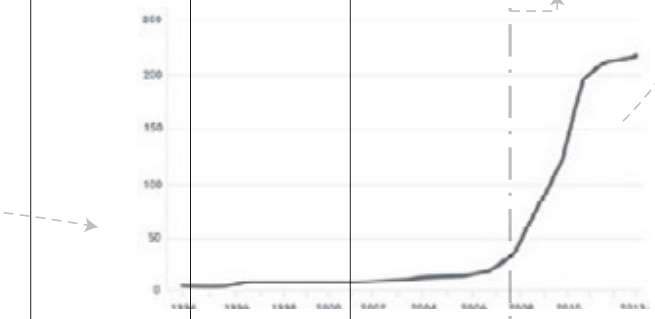
November 17, 2004 \$7.6 billion Olympic bid unveiled Stadium planned for Hudson Yards location

July 6, 2005 London chosen as the host for 2012 games

January 19, 2005 City Council approves Hudson Yards Master plan for Olympic bid



Special zoning district created Deregulating the area



2008 Financial Crisis

December 22, 2009 City council approves the final rezoning for the west railroad of Hudson Yards

Hudson Yards is Zoned for...

- 25,800,000 ft² Class A office space
- 20,000 Housing Units
- 2,000,000 ft² Hotel
- 750-seat Public School
- 20 acres public open space
- 7-line Extension

EB-5 Visa Program
A means for foreigners to buy visas by investing in real estate

Rules for EB-5
Foreigners who invest \$500,000 to \$1 million in U.S. real estate projects can purchase visas for their families

Intended as a way to jump start investment in rural areas and distressed urban areas

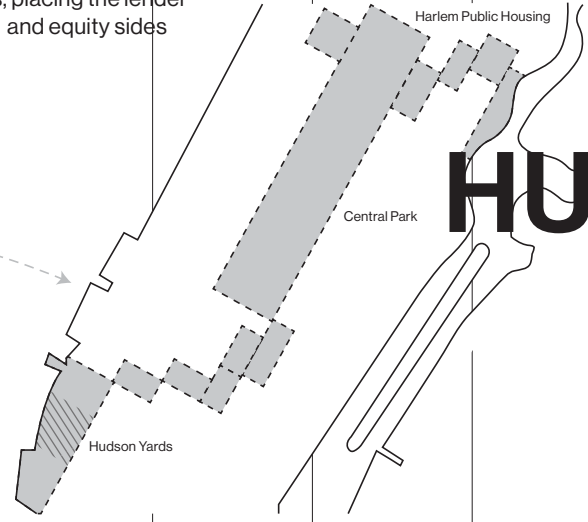
EB-5 visa applicants must invest a minimum of \$500,000 in a project within a designated geographic area called a targeted employment area (TEA)

For an urban area to count as a TEA, it has to meet 150% of national unemployment

"Probably the single most important economic project that this city has undertaken in decades"



April 2013 MTA helped create "severable lease" structure that allowed for mezzanine loans, placing the lender on both the debt and equity sides



EB-5 District 'distressed urban area' district drawn to qualify Hudson Yards for EB-5 funds

2001 - 2022
HUDSON YARDS

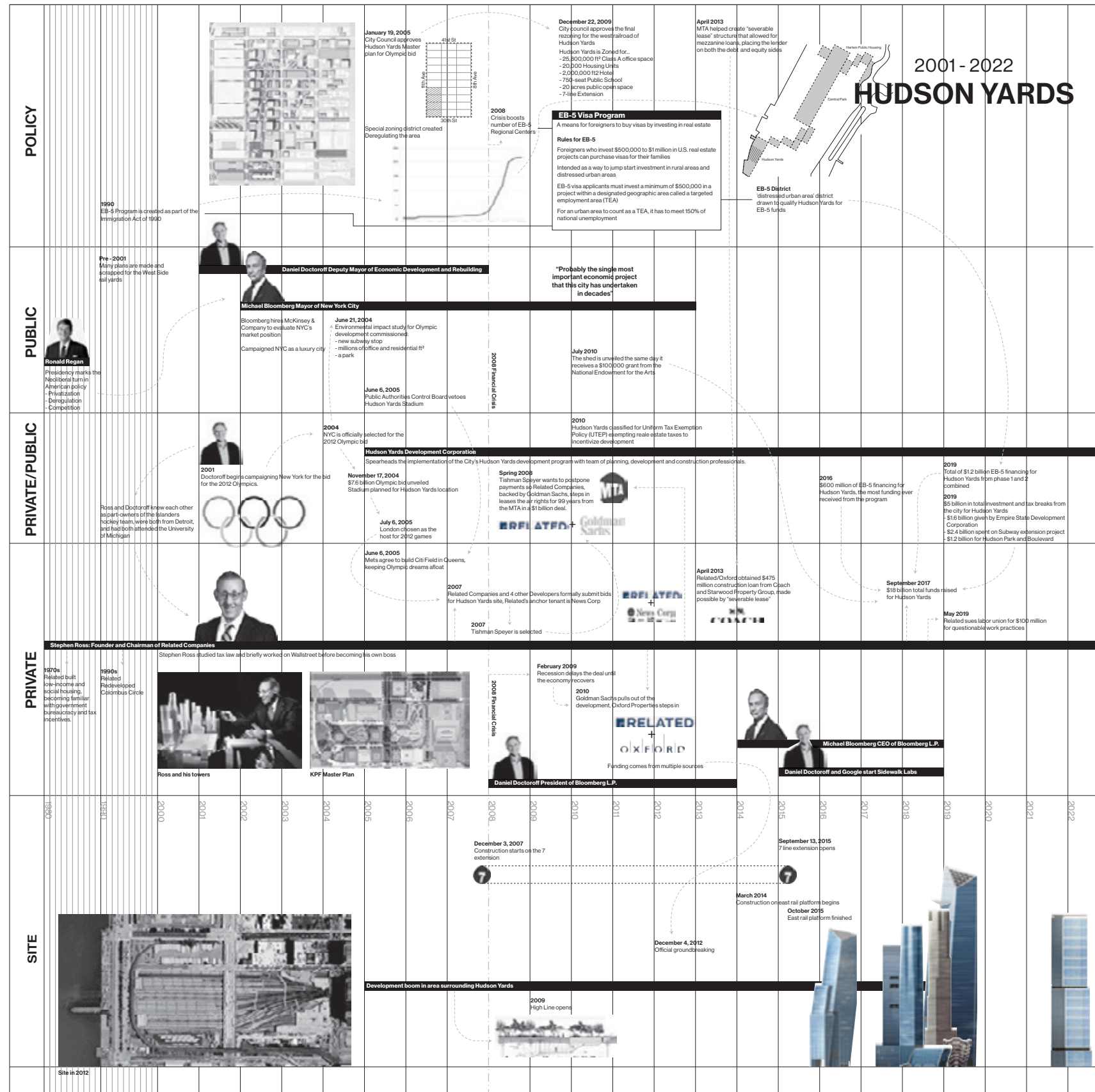
2016 \$600 million of EB-5 financing for Hudson Yards, the most funding ever received from the program

2019 Total of \$1.2 billion EB-5 financing for Hudson Yards from phase 1 and 2 combined

2019 \$5 billion in total investment and tax breaks from the city for Hudson Yards

- \$1.6 billion given by Empire State Development Corporation
- \$2.4 billion spent on Subway extension project
- \$1.2 billion for Hudson Park and Boulevard

Hudson Yards: Timeline



PRIVATE

1970s
Related built low-income and social housing, becoming familiar with government bureaucracy and tax incentives.

1990s
Related Redeveloped Columbus Circle

Stephen Ross: Founder and Chairman of Related Companies

Stephen Ross studied tax law and briefly worked on Wallstreet before becoming his own boss

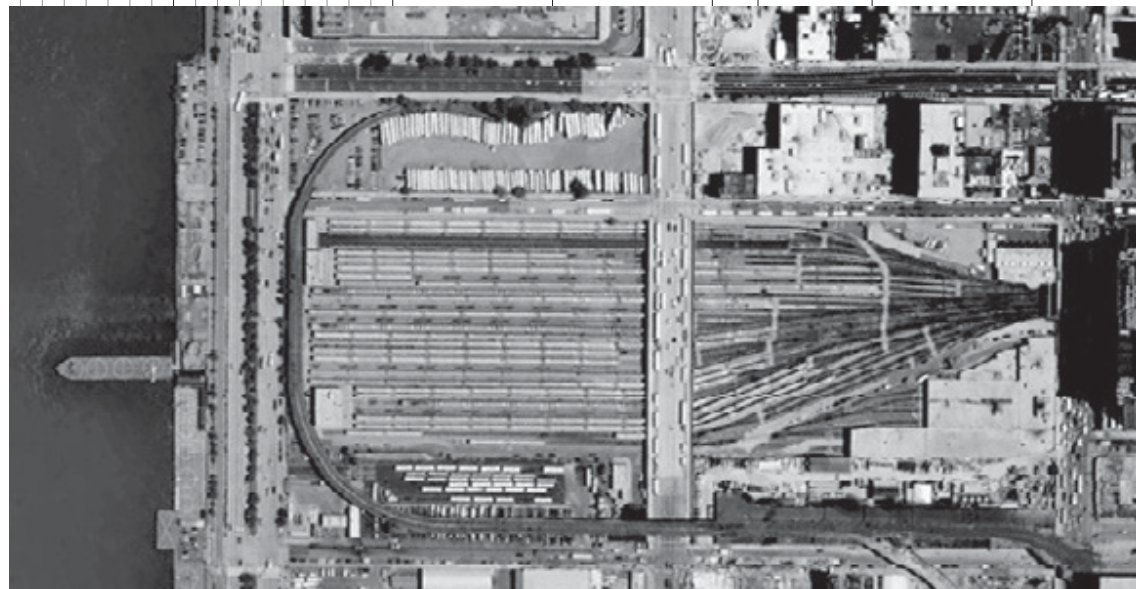


Ross and his towers



KPF Master Plan

SITE



Site in 2012

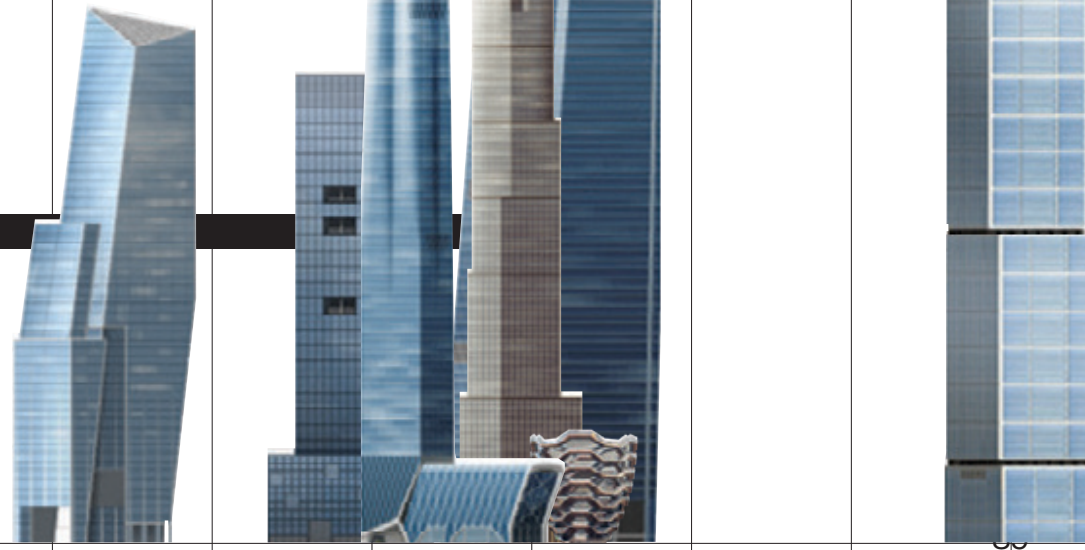
Development boom in area surrounding Hudson Yards

2009
High Line opens

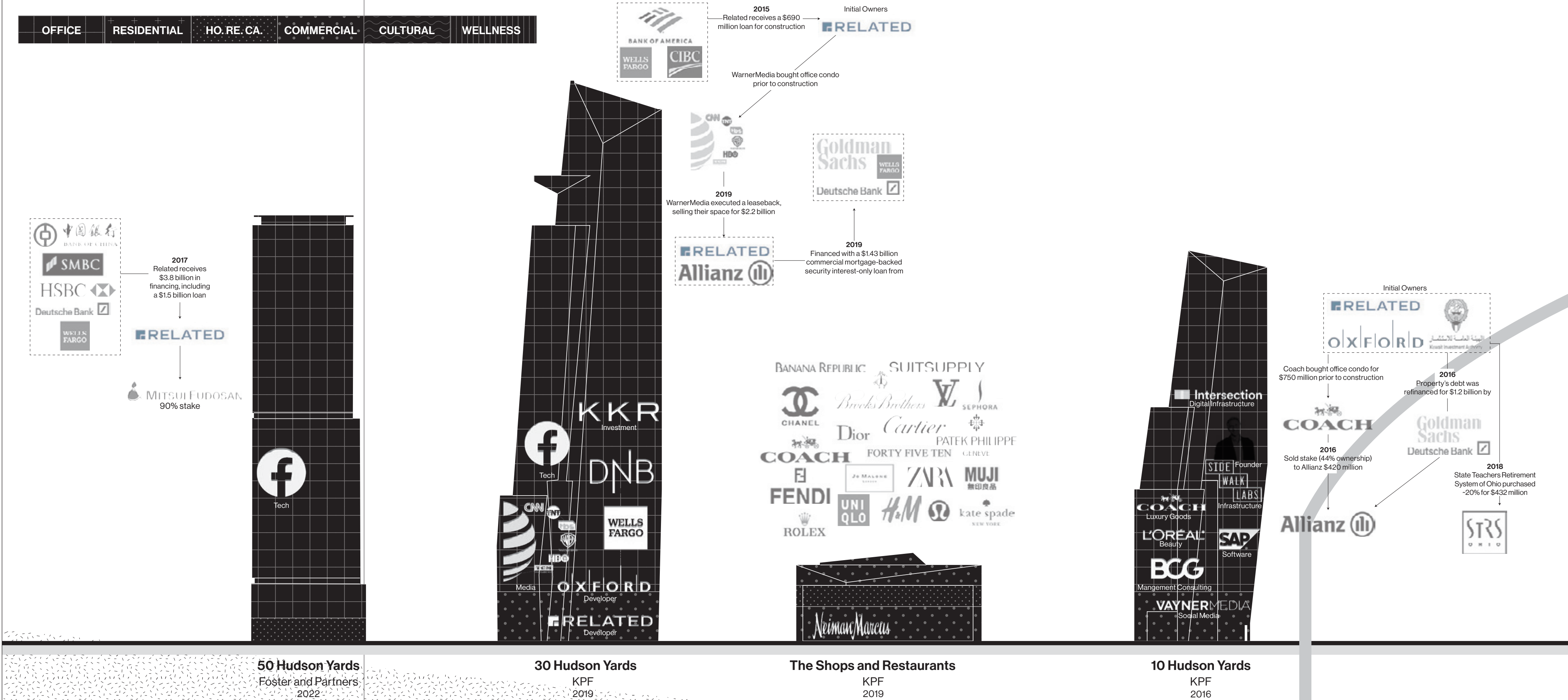
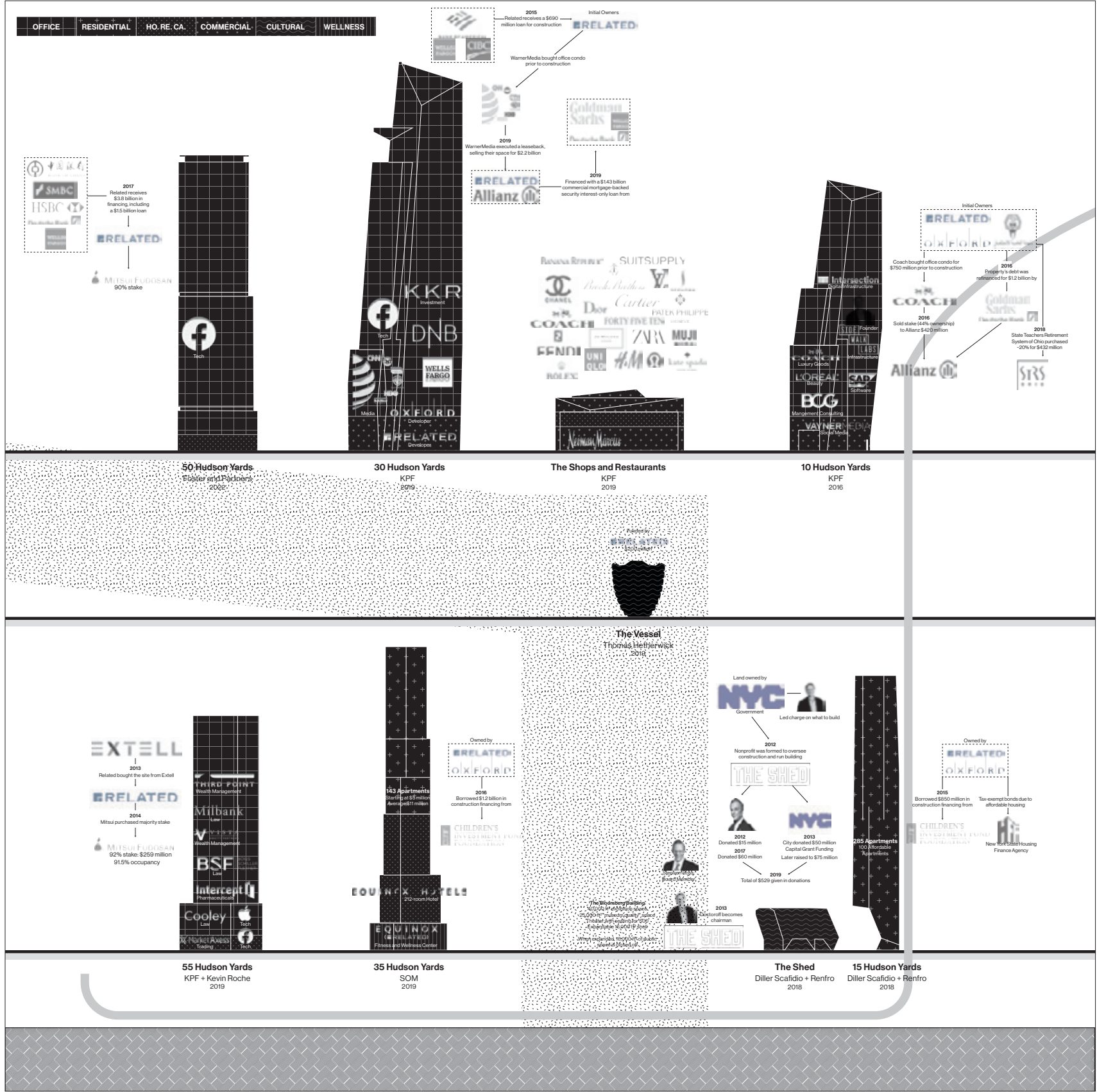


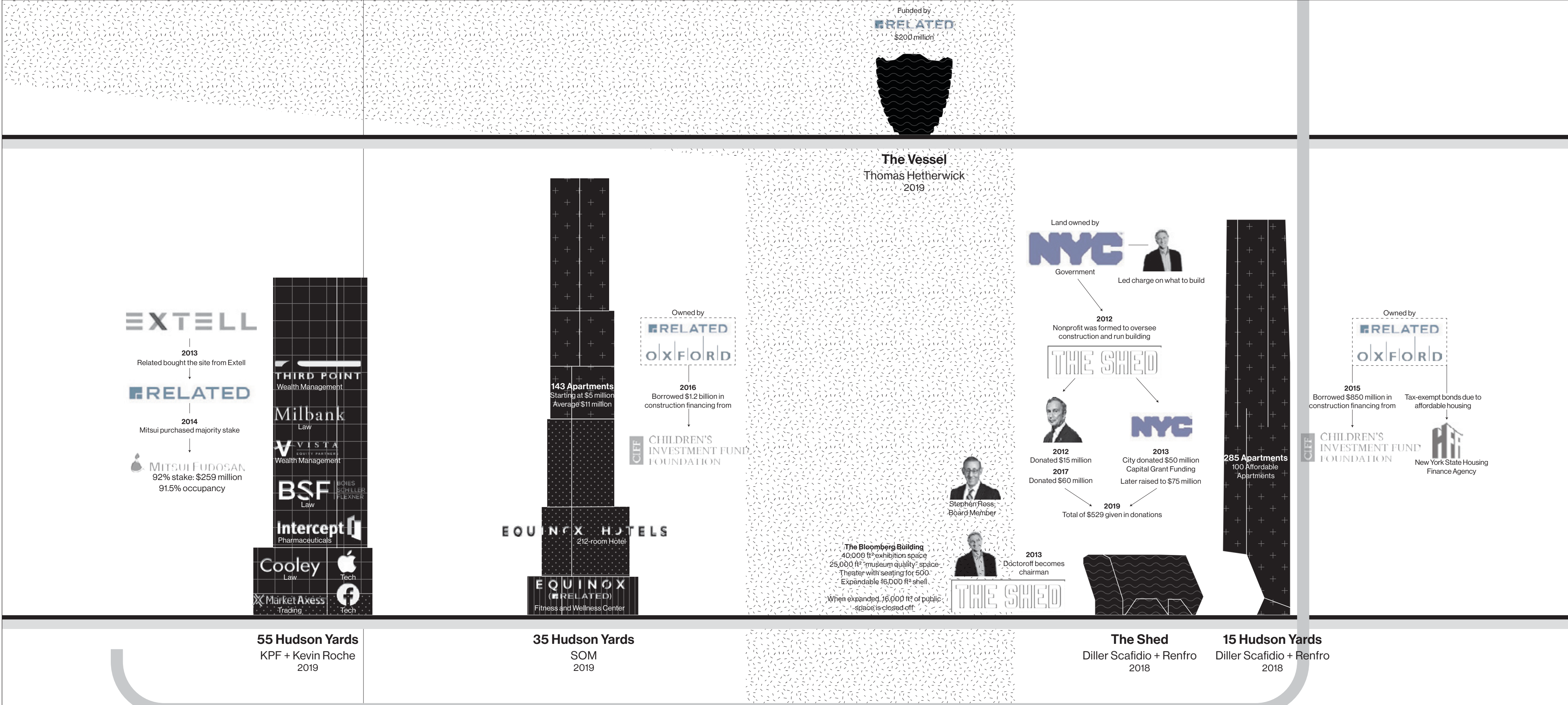
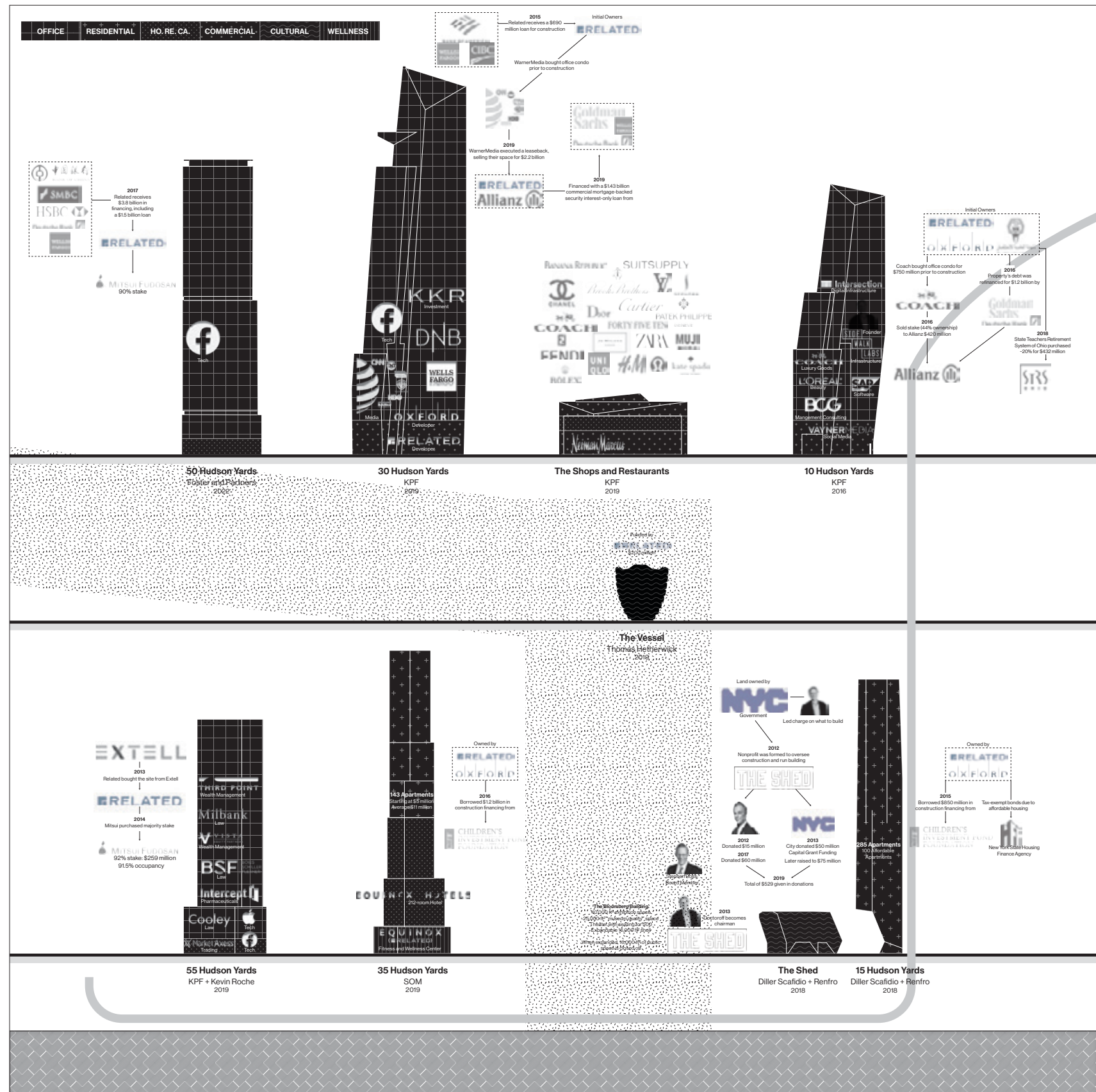
December 4, 2012
Official groundbreaking

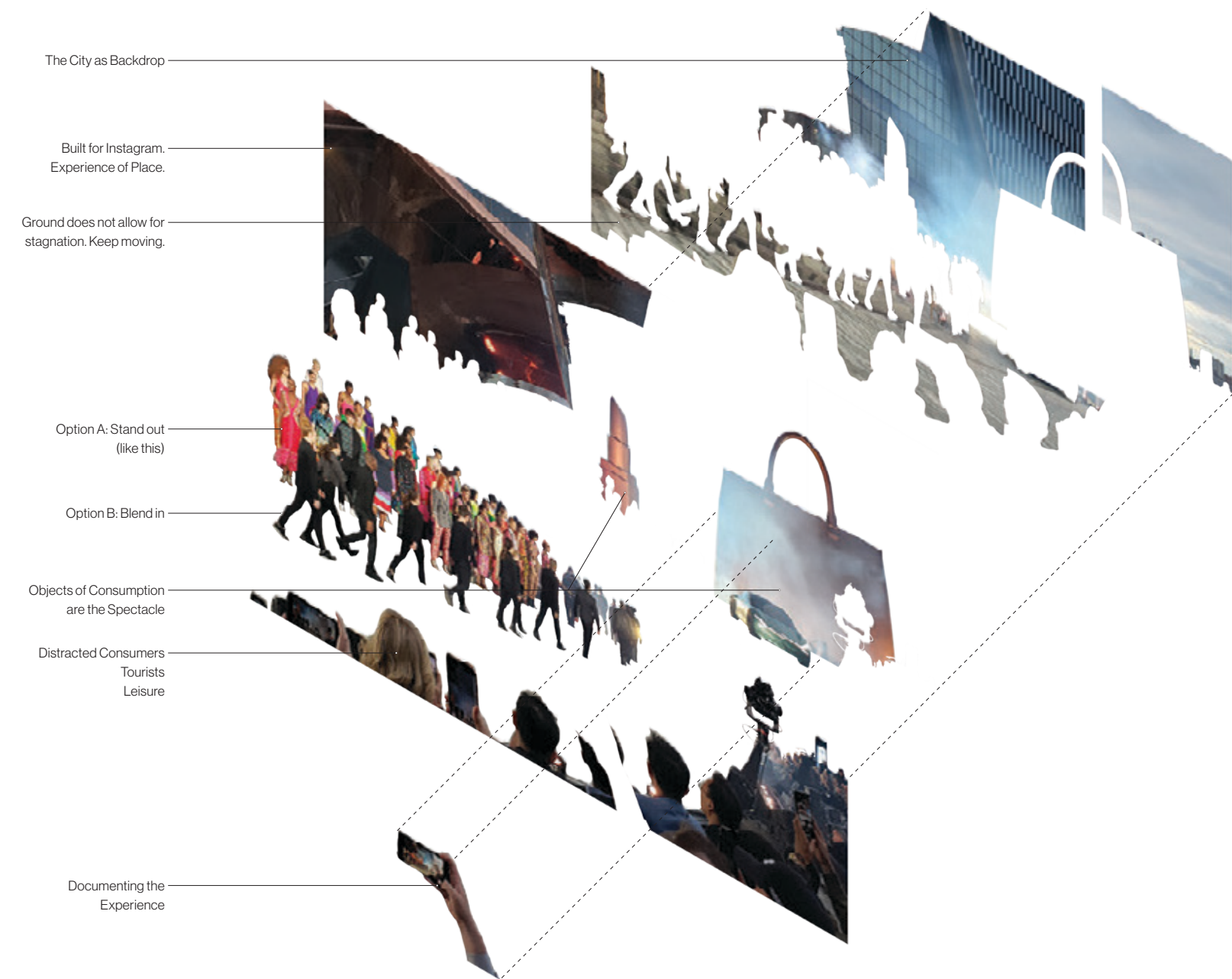
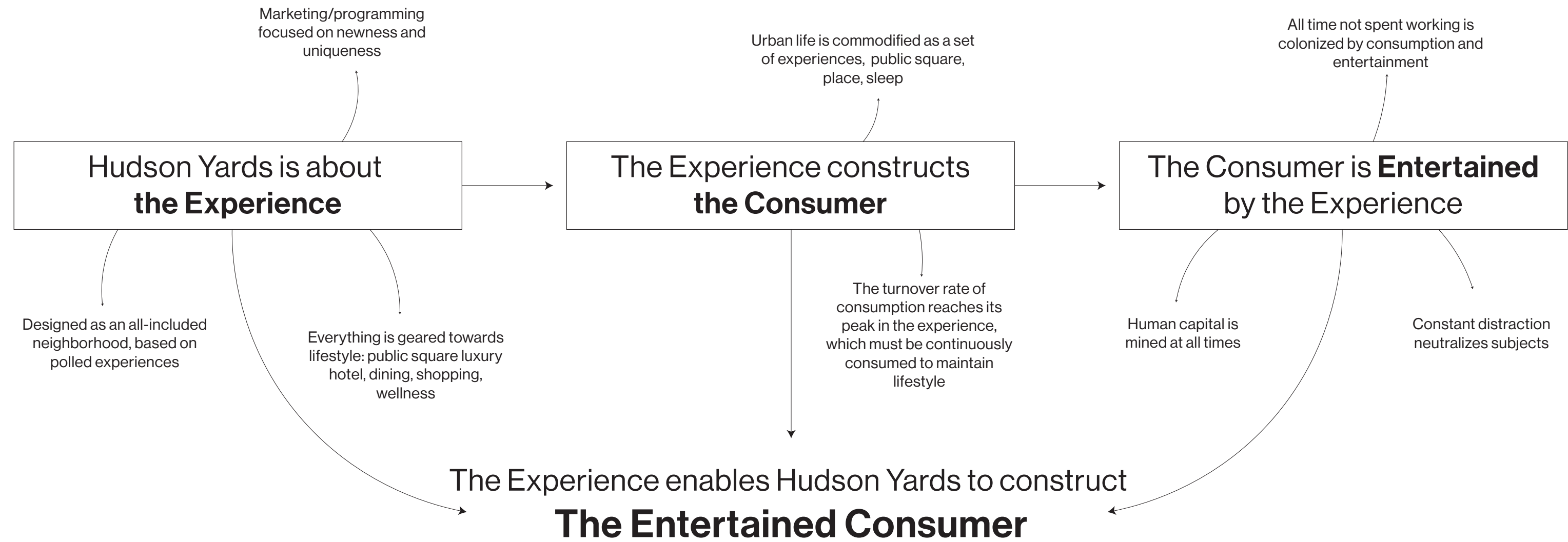
March 2014
Construction on east rail platform begins
October 2015
East rail platform finished

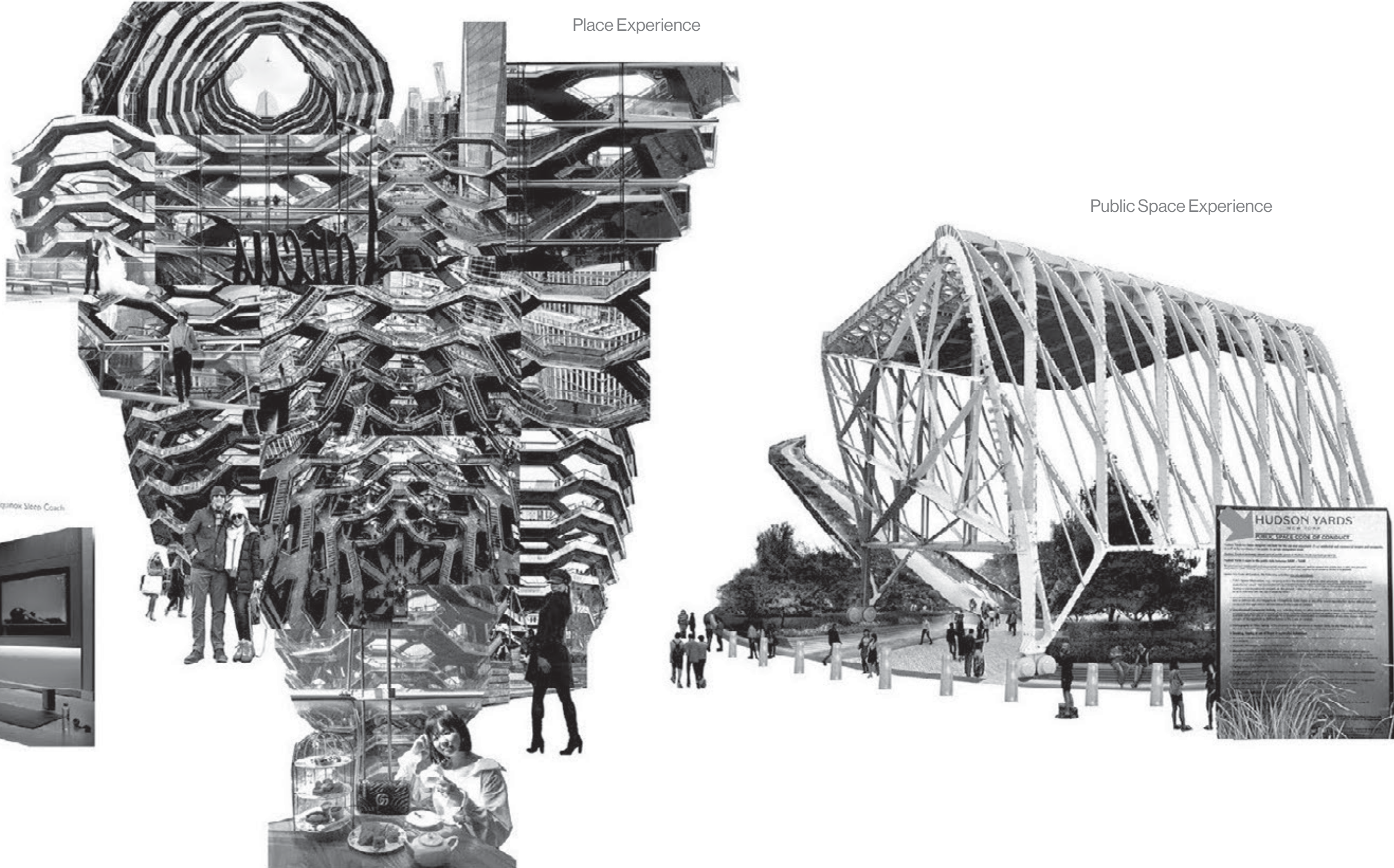
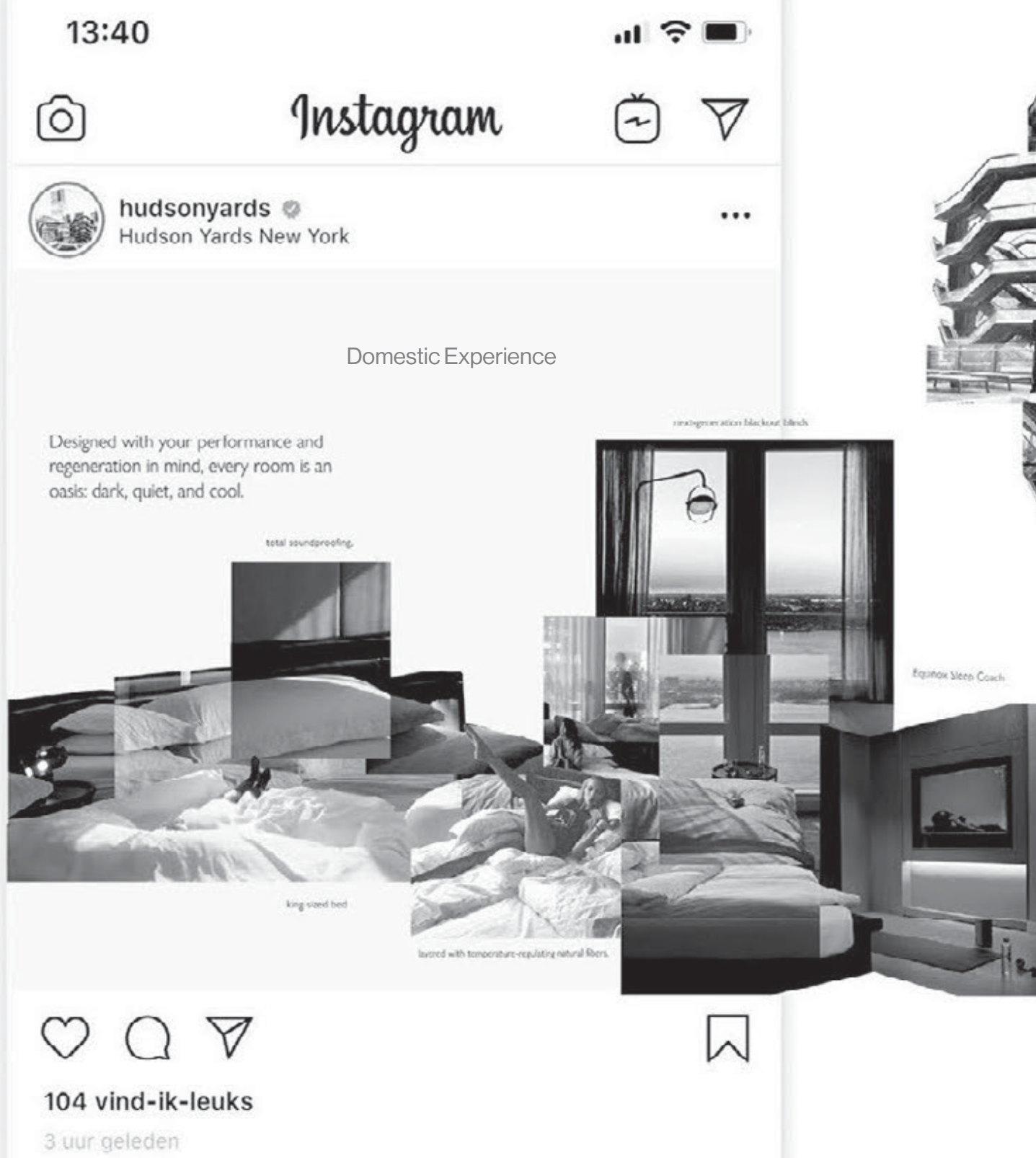
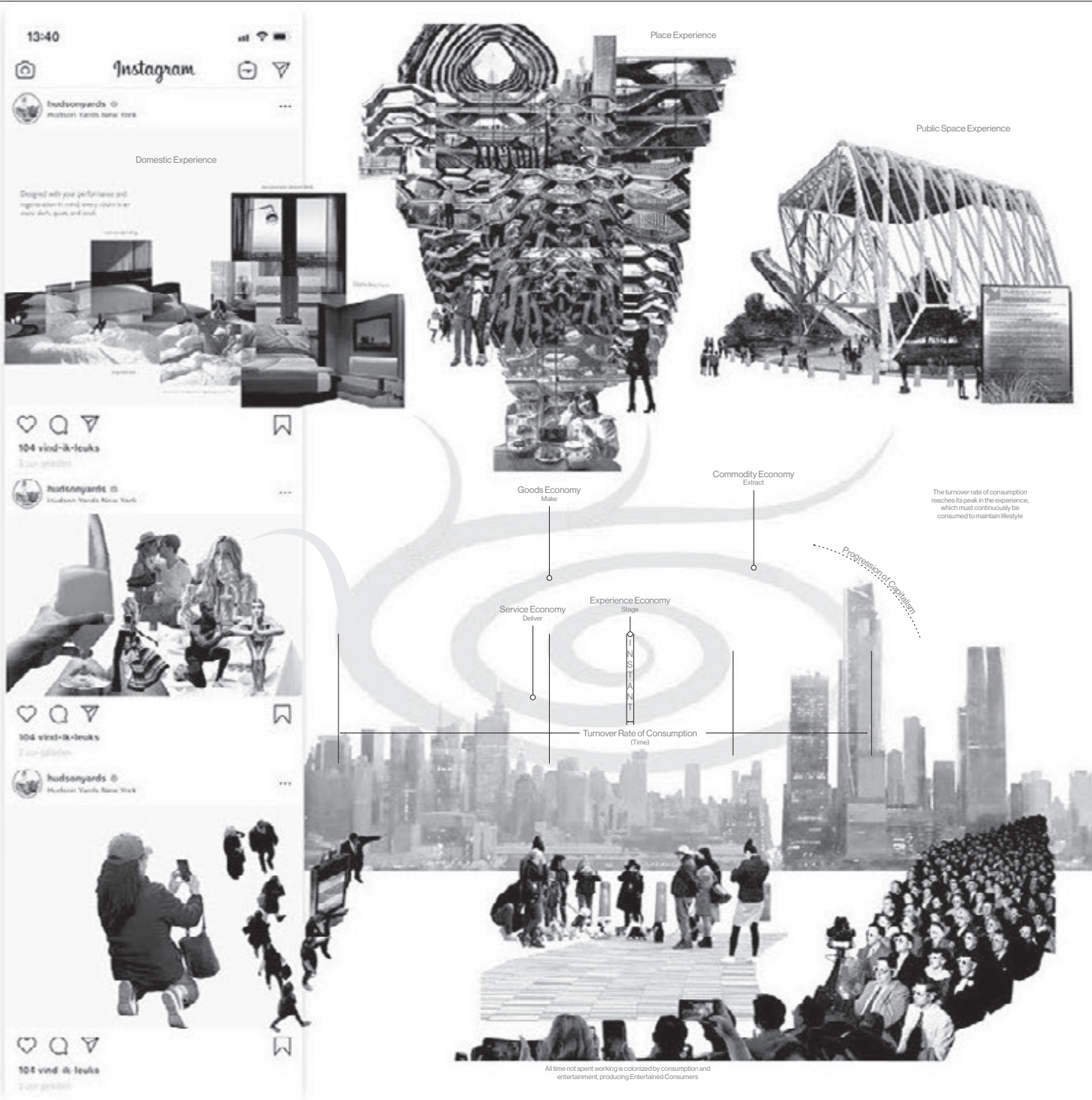


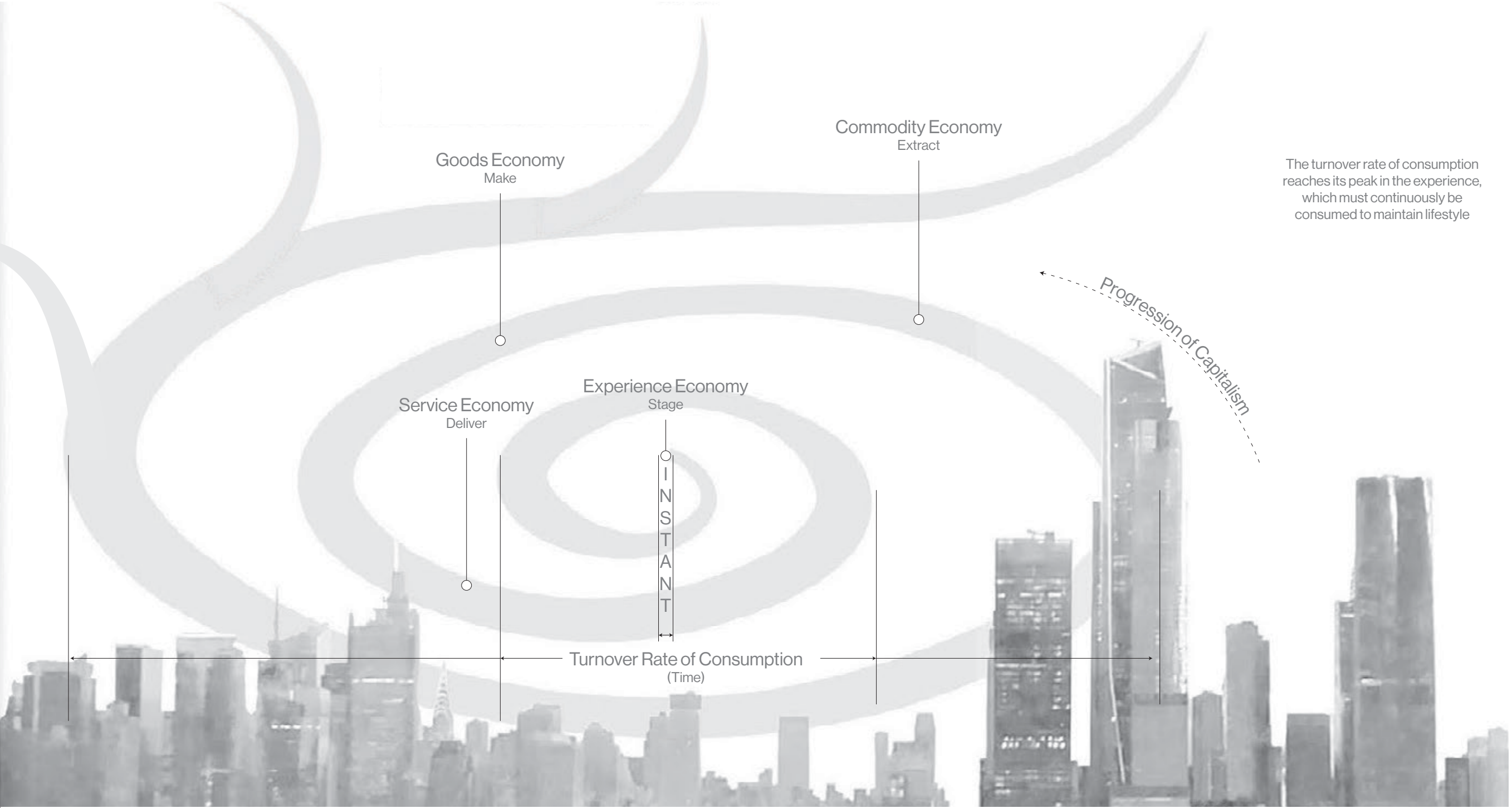
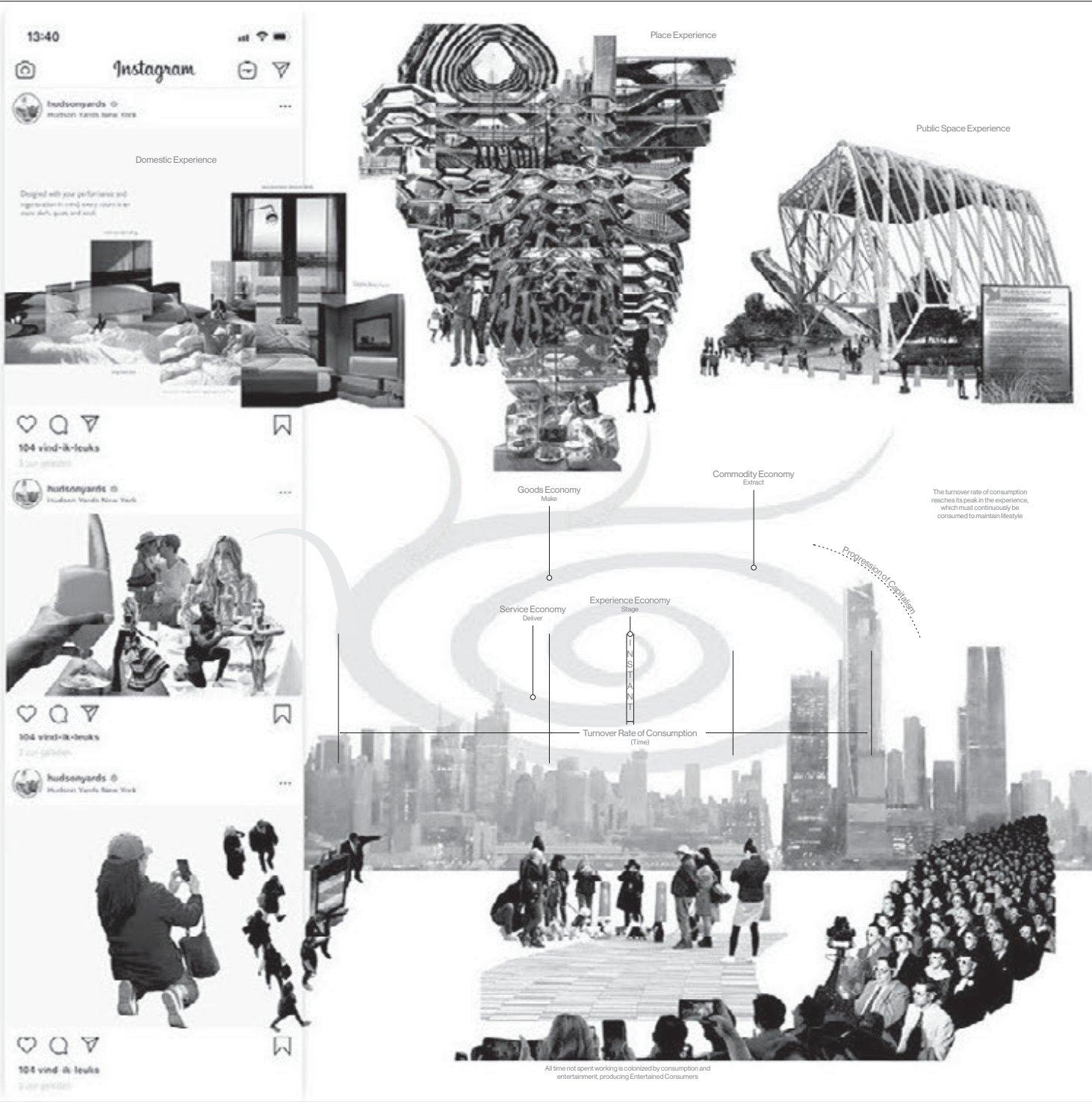
Hudson Yards: Economic Elevation

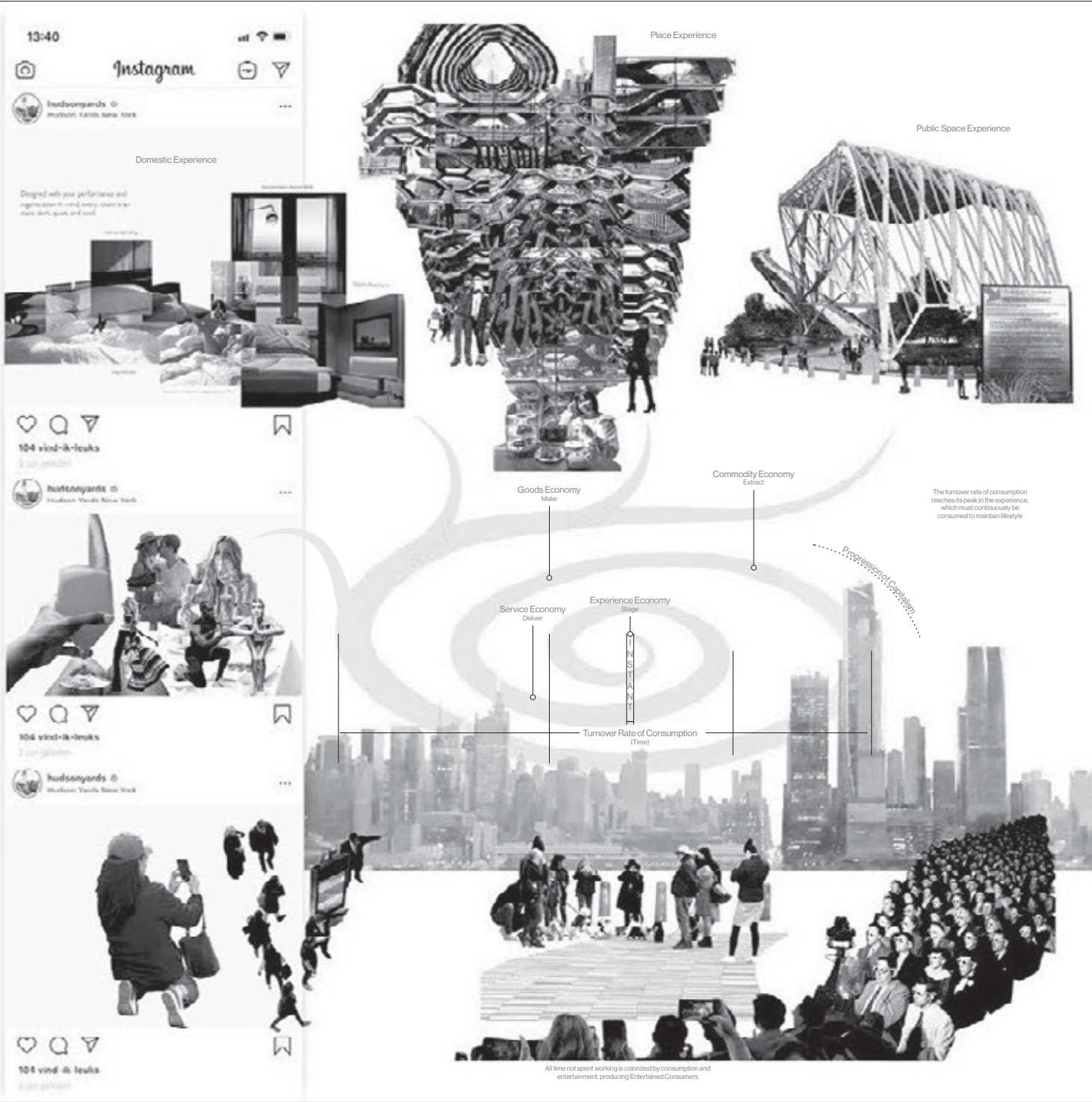




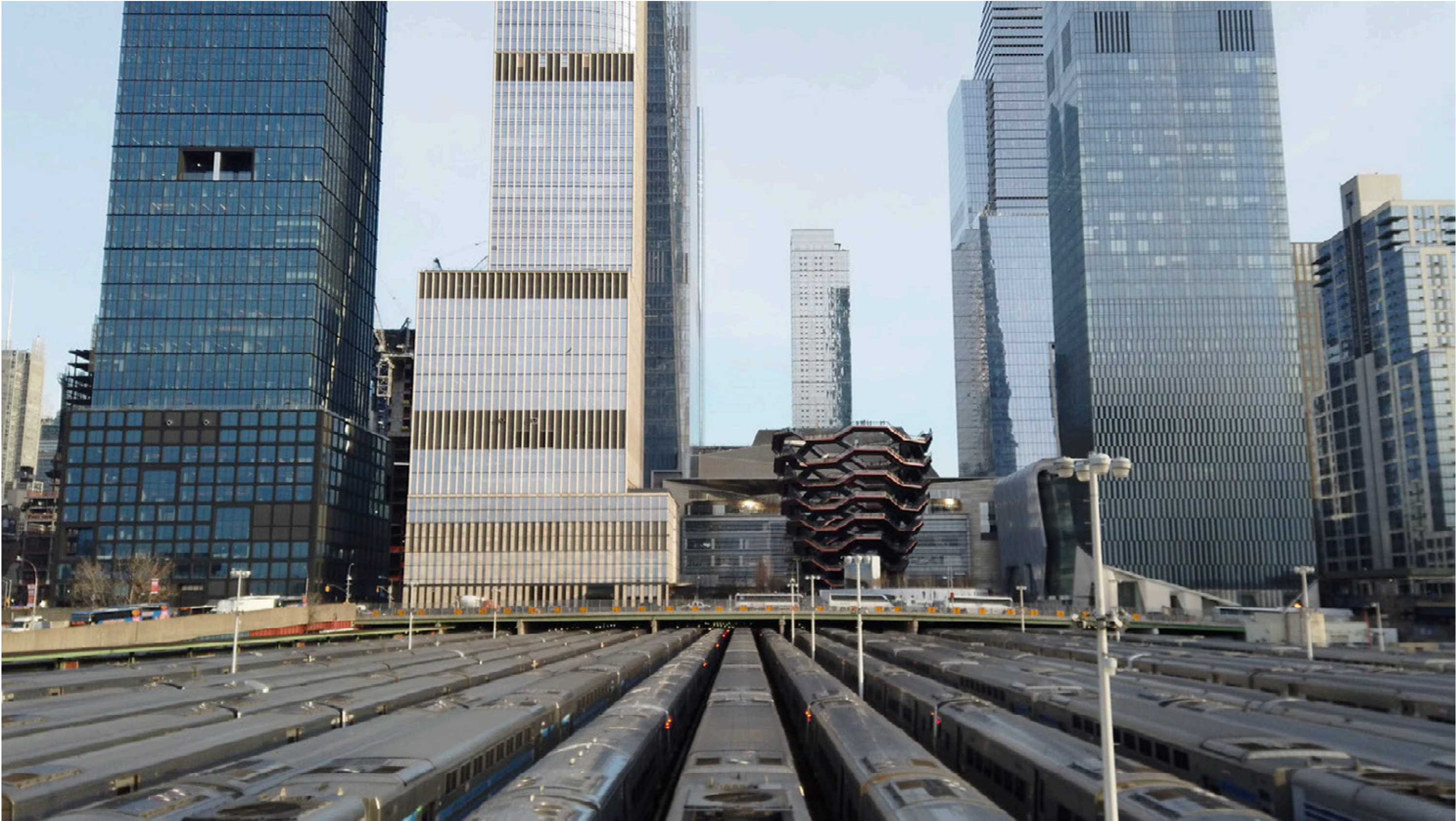


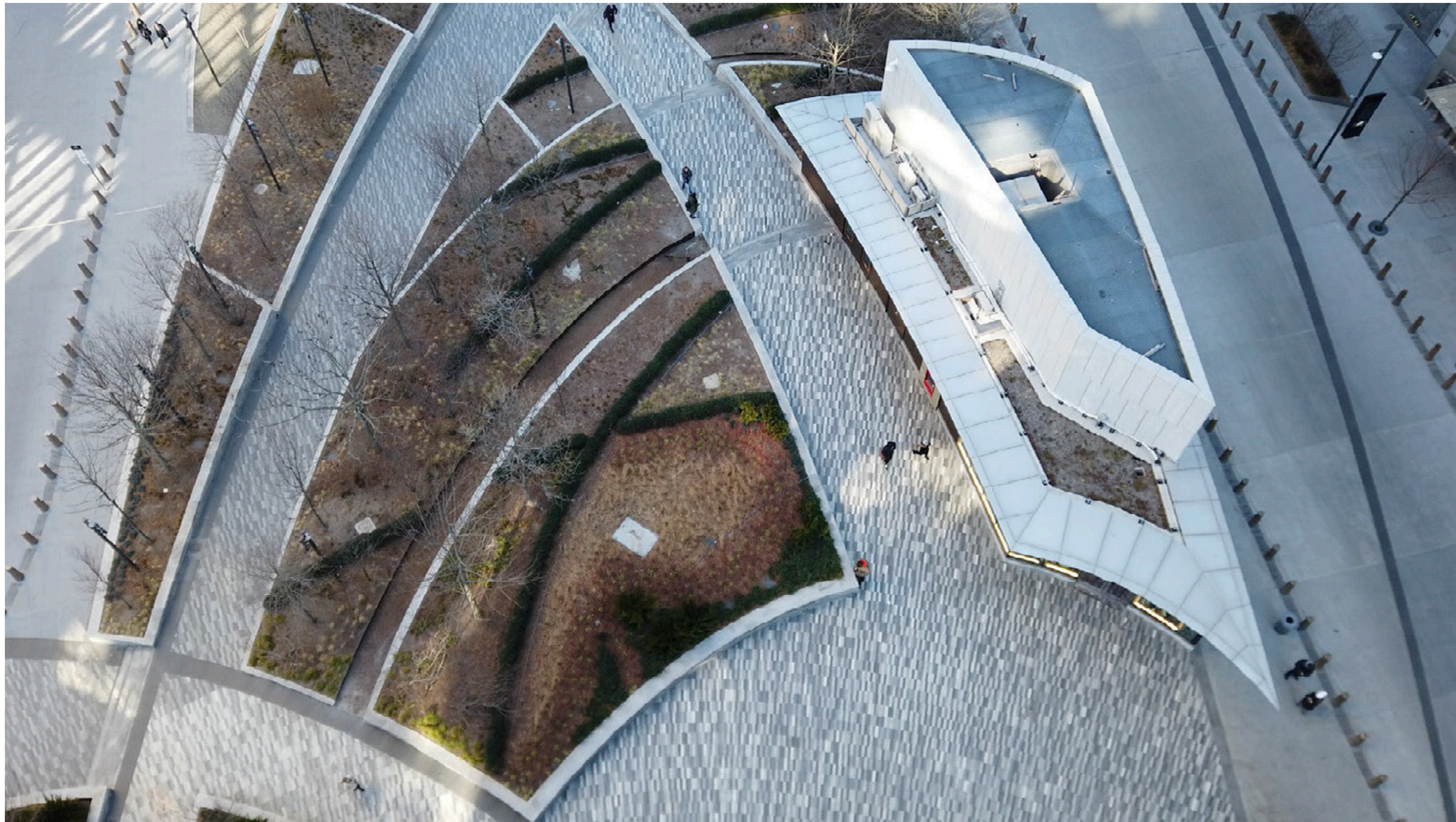


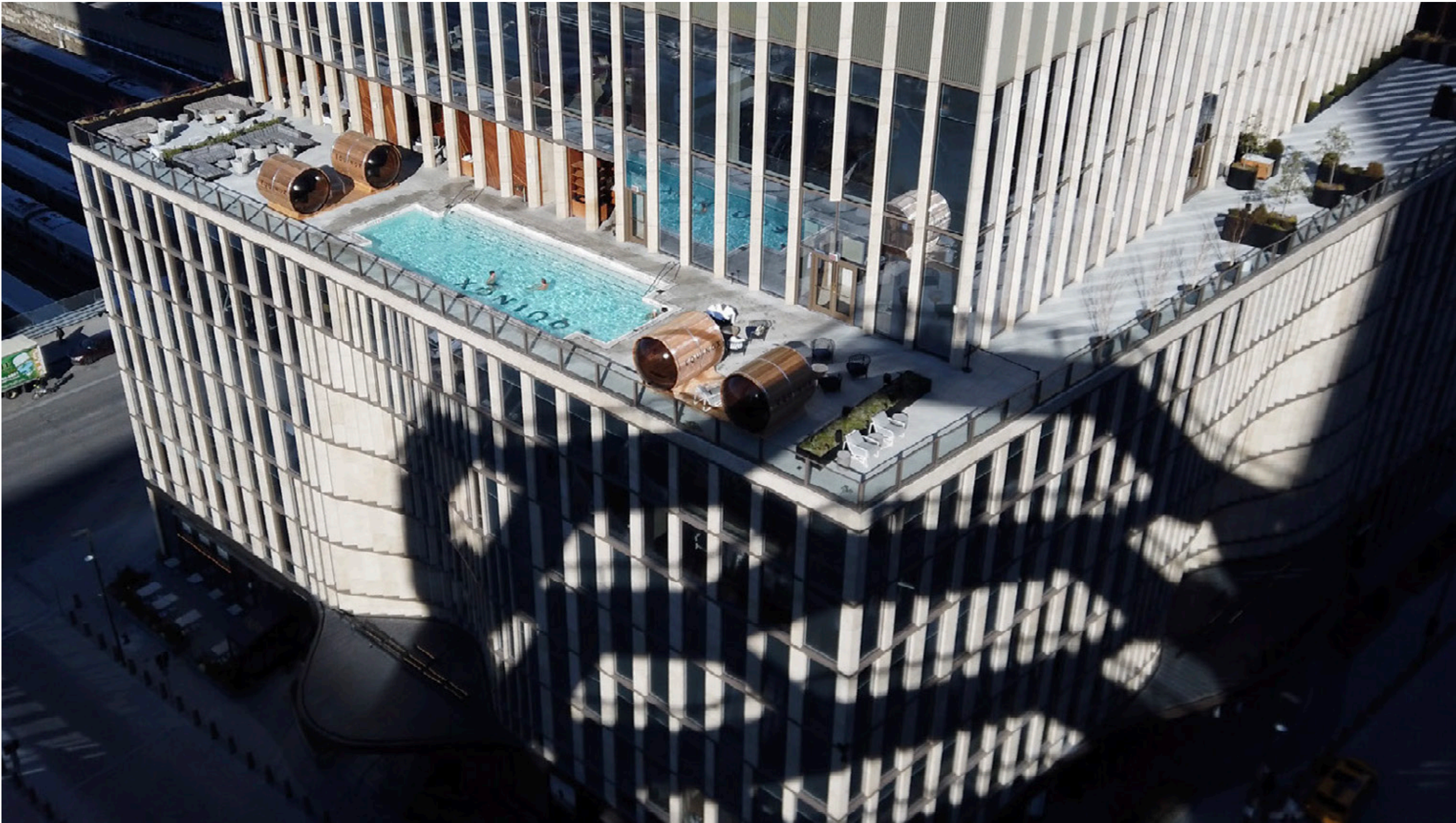




All time not spent working is colonized by consumption and entertainment, producing Entertained Consumers











Aureli, Pier Vittorio: The Possibility of an Absolute Architecture

It is primarily the final chapter in The Possibility of an Absolute Architecture, The City Within the City, which is most resonant in my work. This chapter discusses the work of Oswald Mathias Ungers, OMA, and the Project of the City as Archipelago. Here, the monotonous force of urbanization (mobility, integration) is pitted against the singularity of the city, a site of confrontation and coexistence. Whereas an architecture of difference supports the infinite variation of commercial competition, true architecture can be a point of entry for the project of the city and what survives of its idea. Essentially, the book contrasts the global urbanization of capital with an idea of architecture as a singularity which stands apart from the monotonous fabric (though not in its 'iconic' form).

Baudrillard and Nouvel: The Singular objects of Architecture

Böhme, Gernot: The Aesthetics of Atmospheres

Chayka, Kyle: Welcome to Airspace (The Verge)

Subtitled, How Silicon Valley helps spread the same sterile aesthetic across the world, this article discusses the homogenized aesthetic of the yuppies. It names AirBnb as one of the platforms which has generated a 'familiar-but-local' aesthetic that transforms homes across the world to upper-middle-class Super 8s. The article cites apps such as Foursquare, which use algorithms to

Cunningham: The Architecture of Money

Davis, Mike: Who Will Build the Ark

<https://irows.ucr.edu/cd/courses/10/reader/New%20Left%20Review%20-%20Mike%20Davis%20%20Who%20Will%20Build%20the%20Ark.htm>

De Beistegui, Miguel: The End of Neoliberalism?

This text, derived from a talk given in 2009, is incredibly clear in the distinction between Neoliberal and Liberal political-economic ideologies. He makes the claim that a crash like 2008 is exactly what the Neoliberal system is set up to do. His talk counters the claims that 2008 was the "end" of Neoliberalism.

https://medium.com/@arendt_center/the-end-of-neoliberalism-e62d99c9cedc

Deleuze: A Thousand Plateaus - Capitalism and Schizophrenia

Easterling, Keller: Enduring Innocence

Frampton, Kenneth: Critical Regionalism

Foucault, Michel: The Birth of Biopolitics

Gahl: How to Study Public Life

Hackworth, Jason: The Neoliberal City

Harvey, David: A Brief History of Neoliberalism

This book is incredibly useful for the summarization of Neoliberalism's history, objectives, and outputs. It identifies Neoliberalism as a long-standing project of the economic elite to reinstate class structures and consolidate wealth to the top of the pyramid. This is achieved through a rhetoric of freedom which appeals to basic human desires. This economic ideology has been incredibly successful in enlarging the wealth gap and reinstating power to the economic elite. This text makes very clear the theoretical objectives of neoliberalism and its real action.

Harvey, David: Spaces of Hope

Harvey, David: The Political Economy of Public Space

In this essay, Harvey uses the case study of Haussmanian Paris to describe the importance of the relation between public and quasi-public spaces (shops, cafes) in building the character of public space. He cites a prose poem by Baudelaire called 'The Eyes of the Poor,' which tells the story of misaligned experience between two lovers. When one sees a poor family watching him in an elite cafe along the boulevard, he is stricken with guilt. His lover, on the other hand, wrinkles her nose in disgust and asks the unsightly poor be removed.

Hatherley, Owen. "The Architecture of Neoliberalism by Douglas Spencer Review – Privatising the World." The Guardian, January 12, 2017.

This article offers a review of the book central to my research, The Architecture of Neoliberalism, by Douglas Spencer. The conclusion is what struck me as most interesting. The author implies that Schumacher and the voices of Neoliberalism are like the Marxists before the Soviet Union collapsed, and that post-crisis, Neoliberalism has taken on a more subversive form. He predicts the architecture will not be ruthless, but dull and disciplinarian.

Ibelings: Supermodernism

Jameson: PostModernism, The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism

Petty, Josh: Escaping the Fog of Capital Realism

https://medium.com/@joshpetty_31591/escaping-the-fog-of-capitalist-realism-12aac2ee9f79

Rassmussen: PostFascism, The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism

Schumacher, Patrik: Corporate Fields

Schumacher: Free Market Urbanism – Urbanism beyond Planning (Master Planning the Adaptive City)

Schumacher + Eisenman: I am trying to imagine... Log 28

In this interview of Patrik Schumacher by Peter Eisenman, the two discuss Schumacher's goals of Parametricism. It is particularly in the end that the aims of Schumacher's work come forward. He talks about parametric analysis as a tool for understanding free, rule-governed actors' behavior in reaction to particular spatial conditions (carpet vs. hard floor). In this way, he claims the complexity of his work can steer subject within semiotics. Create a grammar for expected behavior.

Sharma, Sarah: In the Meantime - Temporality and Cultural Politics

Speaks, Michael: Individualization without Identity

In this essay from 2002, Speaks contrasts Berci Florian's proposal for the branding of cities with Rem Koolhaas' theory of Blankness. Florian's position is that urban development should be shaped by thematic identity, making surveys, focus-groups, and profiling the new tools of the urban planner. Cities must construct their identity that holds up as unique in the growing urban marketplace. In contrast, Koolhaas argues for blankness, painting identity as a restrictor of progress which produces caricatures. The generic city is the result when planning goes on autopilot (when the market rules the city). Speaks responds to these two points with the crisis of public space, which is no longer experienced as something social, but a commercial environment devoted to an individual's construction of a 'life of one's own'. The solution for the city brander is that they must orchestrate a unique experience. Economies have shifted from products and service to the experience surrounding a product.

Spencer, Douglas: The Architecture of Neoliberalism

This book has been incredibly influential as a starting point for tying Neoliberal ideology to Architecture. In his analysis, Spencer heralds FOA, OMA, and Zaha Hadid Architects as the horsemen of Neoliberal architecture. He breaks down their writing, which often refers back to Deleuz and Deleuzism, and frames their projects in terms of the Neoliberal agenda. Similarly he talks of the recent trend towards affect as a result of Neoliberalism.



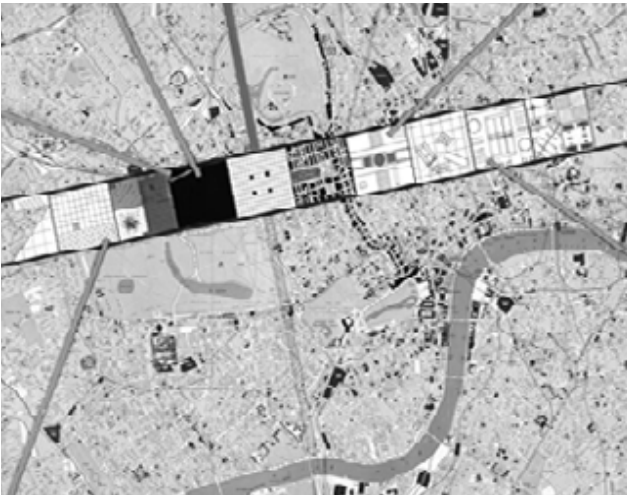
Superstudio



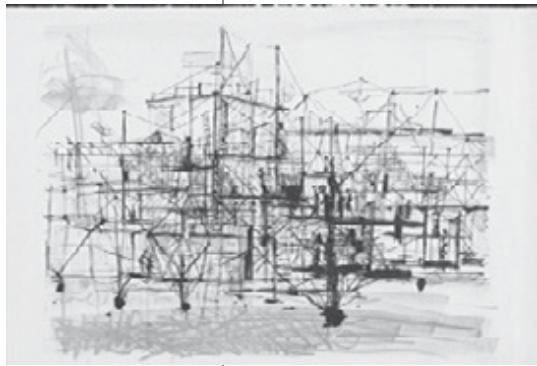
The Situationists



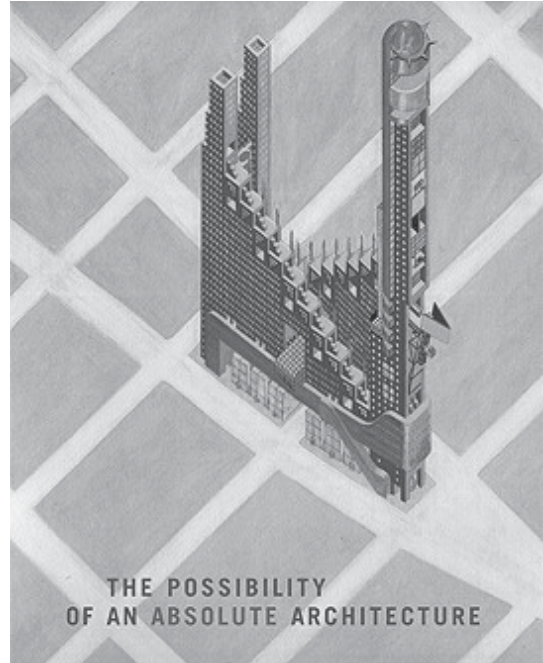
Archizoom



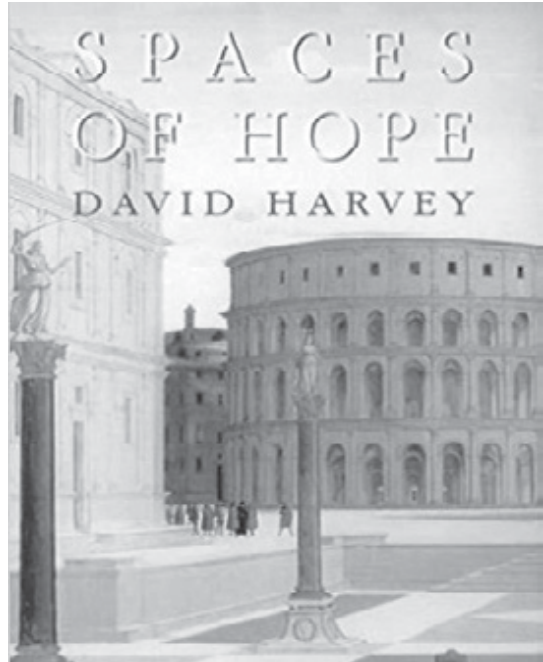
Exodus: Voluntary Prisoners of Architecture



Constant's New Babylon



Pier Vittorio Aureli



David Harvey



Russian Constructivism



Garden City

Writing my Own Truth Games

Where Is This Going?

What makes working on this problem of ‘what are you going to do about it?’ so difficult is the inherent truth that the only thing that will successfully rupture Capitalism is Capitalism itself. And by no means is this event a pipe dream, our current epoch of Late Capitalism is running itself into ever more rapid cycles of crisis, and the virgin territory for expansion is running slim. If the Marxists are to be believed, capitalism will fail, and soon, but of course the question of what will come after may be worse.

I would like to imagine this moment, when capital has pushed itself to its own limits, and speculate on how far it will have taken us. To follow the trajectory set out by today’s spaces of capital to its perfection. To lay the contradictions of capital bare to their own demise, so that one may see them plainly in their own life.

A bit of an extended metaphor:

If capitalism is to be imagined as an archipelago of islands, connected by a web of bridges. The terrorist bombing of a single bridge, a single effect of capitalism, would do little to disrupt the system. Even a coordinated attack, bombing twenty bridges in one moment, can provide opportunity for capitalism to rebuild, hiring the bombers to design them bomb-proof. No, this would not disrupt the archipelago’s web.

There is, however, the natural force of the wind, which, when blown from an uncalculated direction, causes the bridges to

slowly start to sway. That wind need not pick up, but simply continue its steady pressure, and the bridge’s sway will grow larger with every oscillation. If the wind continues to blow, the bridges will reach such force that they tear themselves apart, for they were not built properly to begin with. This is what I’m going for. If the inherent logics of capital (wind) continue to blow, the bridges will tear themselves apart. It makes me wonder what will its deck look like in that moment before it snaps? So that we might notice the subtle movements back and forth underneath our feet at this very moment.

The films offer a first look into this world. They are shot in some of the most blatant spaces of Neoliberal ideology, and offer an eerie speculation on how these spaces naturalize that ideology. They show an eerie world of glass with deactivated protagonists stumbling through them. They show a clear served and servant class, boundaries, gates, cameras.

Architecture as narrative becomes a powerful technique of critique in the radical projects of Superstudio and the thesis work of Koolhaas, Vreindorp, E. Zenghelis, and Z. Zenghelis (among the other projects listed in references). My thesis will mirror their medium of world-building and radical future.